

LORD LONDON

KEBLE HOWARD



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LORD LONDON

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A TALE OF ACHIEVEMENT

By

KEBLE HOWARD

pseud.

Author of "The Smiths of Surbiton"

Etc.

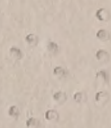
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AUTHOR'S NOTE

Why none of the many writers who also know him personally has never before sat down to endeavor to give the public a true picture of one of the most fascinating and most misrepresented men of our time, I cannot understand. Perhaps they waited to ask permission, and were, quite naturally, refused. I made no such mistake as that. Perhaps they were afraid that he would turn and rend them — in his mighty machines — for their presumption. Well, he may rend me if he likes; yet not even "Lord London" himself can deprive me of the pleasure that I have had in weaving around the main facts of his career, known to all the world, the poor embroideries of my own imagination.

K. H.

Merstham, June 3, 1913.

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LORD LONDON

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I

HANNIBAL AND HASDRUBAL

THE boy is not the father of the man. The boy *is* the man. For example:

The Quain boys were playing cricket. Hannibal, the eldest, was bowling. You must picture him as a boy of fifteen, fair-haired, with a rather straight fringe hanging slant-wise across his forehead; of average height, well-built, lithe and quick. It remains to be added that his eyes were blue, and his lips rather full, more or less in the shape of the much-envied Cupid's bow.

Hasdrubal was batting. A year younger than Hannibal, he was larger in every way, sturdier, and, as a natural consequence, slower. The other five Quain boys were distributed about the lawn—the lawn of their father's picturesque, comfortable, but by no means splendid residence in St. John's Wood. Socrates was in the deep field, having received strict injunctions to see that the ball did not crash through the cucumber frame.

Virgil, a tall boy of eleven or twelve, was at point. Galahad was the long-stop. Anthony was making himself generally useful, first on one side of the pitch, then on the other, and now back again. Ajax, the youngest of the brothers, was not yet old enough to be pressed into the service of Hannibal and Hasdrubal. He sat sunning himself on the lowest flight of the steps that led from the dining-room to the garden.

It will be useful to observe the methods of Hannibal and Hasdrubal. Hannibal was a very astute bowler, not to say cunning. You never knew where to have him. He would, for example, take a long swift run, and deliver an unexpectedly slow ball with a tremendous break from leg; or he would walk up to the wicket in the most leisurely manner imaginable, and then, with a sudden swing of his lithe arm, send down something between a rifle bullet and a cannon-ball. Occasionally, very occasionally, he would try his skill with an "under-hand"; that was only his fun, just to show that he could do that sort of thing as well as anybody else if he liked.

Hasdrubal was the only member of the Quain family who was anything like a match for Hannibal. This was not so much because he came next in age, as that Hasdrubal was as solid in character as in build. When Hannibal was batting, his main thought was to make runs, and make them he did. Hasdrubal, on the other hand, went in

with the determination to stay in, whether he made runs or not. He gradually developed a dogged obstinacy of style that sometimes delighted Hannibal, who hated too easy a victory, and at other times made him very impatient. For Hannibal, as we shall see during the progress of this history, had as many moods as there are ripples on a lake in a summer breeze. That is why he baffled, and still baffles, many worthy folk, who like to make up their minds about a man and have done with it. They might just as well make up their minds, once and for all, about the Irish Channel.

"Play!" cried Hannibal.

"Half a sec," replied Hasdrubal.

"What's up?"

"You're bowling round the wicket."

"I know that."

"Well, you've been bowling over it all this time."

"That's no reason why I shouldn't change if I want to."

"No, but you ought to give me warning."

"All right. I'm going to bowl round the wicket. Play!"

The ball whizzed down the pitch, but Hasdrubal stepped aside and allowed it to knock his middle stump clean out of the ground.

"Out!" announced Hannibal. "You're in now, Soc."

"I'm not out," protested Hasdrubal. "I

didn't try to play that ball because you hadn't given me fresh middle."

"Oh, come on, then."

Fresh middle was duly given, and Hasdrubal, with a face of iron, settled down to defend himself against this new mode of attack. There were more ways than one, however, of getting rid of Hasdrubal. If you could not bowl him, or get him caught, or stumped, you could generally induce him to open his young shoulders and knock the ball over the wall into the next garden. This involved a double penalty: the batsman was out, and he also had to recover the ball.

In the case of the garden to the right, which belonged to an untenanted house, it was easy enough to recover the ball. But in the case of the garden to the left, the matter was very different. That house was occupied by a lady who kept an extremely select seminary for girls between the ages of twelve and sixteen. It is hardly necessary to explain that the Quain boys were a sharp thorn in the side of Miss Crundall. Did she take her young charges for a walk up to the Heath and back, going or coming they were pretty sure to meet the seductive Hannibal or the massive Hasdrubal. If two or three of the young ladies retired to the secluded garden for a modest and ladylike game of croquet, before very long that wretched cricket-ball would make its appearance, causing them to flee for their lives. Miss Crun-

dall had written many sharp little notes on the subject, and sent them to Mr. Quain by one of her maids.

Mr. Quain, who, like his eldest son, was also a person of many moods, had various ways of dealing with these missives. If he happened to be in one mood, he would send for Hannibal and Hasdrubal, and forbid them ever to play cricket in the garden again on pain of exquisite torture and a lingering death. If he were in another mood, he would take a hand with the ball himself, and promise sixpence to the first boy who hit it into Miss Crundall's garden. (Hannibal invariably won the sixpences.) Or, in yet a third and the most ordinary mood, Mr. Quain would chuck the envelope into the fire and light his pipe with the note.

Miss Crundall had next tried the effect of sending sharp little notes to Mrs. Quain. Mrs. Quain was a lady of broad views, especially regarding her seven sons. While she had no desire that any of Miss Crundall's pupils should be stretched senseless by a blow on the head from a cricket ball, she did not really think that the possibilities of this catastrophe should be allowed to have a restricting influence on the pastimes and exercises of her sons. Like a good mother, she wanted, not only the back garden of the little house in St. John's Wood for them to play in, but the whole wide world. Napoleon, she reflected, had made the world his

playground; then why should not Hannibal Quain do the same? She placed no limitations to the possibilities of her eldest son's career, and, where Hannibal went, the others would surely follow. She sent polite replies, therefore, to Miss Crundall's notes, but was careful to give no guarantee that the cricket would be stopped or that the ball would remain outside Miss Crundall's garden.

Under these circumstances, Miss Crundall had at last felt herself justified in instructing her pupils to retain possession of the ball should it again intrude itself among them, and, under no conditions whatever, to yield it up. Hence the formation of the rule among the Quain boys that anybody knocking the ball into Miss Crundall's garden should, in the first place, conclude his innings, and, in the second place, fetch the ball.

No batsman could have resisted the very tempting "long-hop" now sent down by Hannibal. Hannibal himself might have resisted it, but then Hannibal had attributes that were superhuman. Hasdrubal, being merely human, stepped forward and brought his innings to a conclusion in the manner described.

"Out!" cried the other young Quains in chorus. "And get the ball," added Hannibal, quietly.

Hasdrubal did not protest. He had the great virtue of knowing when to give way. In dealing with Hannibal, it was generally better to give

way quickly and gracefully. He threw down the bat, therefore, clambered on to a box kept there for that especial purpose, and peeped over the wall.

"Coast clear?" asked Hannibal in his quick way.

Hasdrubal nodded, scrambled to the top of the wall, and lowered himself stealthily into the garden of the dread Miss Crundall.

But Hasdrubal was wrong. The coast was not clear. It is true that most of Miss Crundall's pupils were taking advantage of the pure and bracing air of Hampstead Heath, but, as it happened, Miss Sheila Gillfoyle, having been excused the walk on account of a headache, was sitting with her book under the cedar.

"What do you want?" she asked, rather sharply, without getting up.

"Oh, beg pardon," said Hasdrubal. "I was just looking for our ball. Did you see it come over?"

"Yes," said Sheila, gazing at him very steadily.

She was a dark little girl, about thirteen years of age, with long legs, large dark eyes, and a slight and very pretty Irish accent. Dark eyes and an Irish accent, of course, had no effect at all upon Hasdrubal. Had he been a year older, he might have taken some interest in the personality of Sheila, though it is doubtful. He was thinking

solely of the cricket-ball, and he felt pretty sure that this very quiet but none the less contemptible little girl, had secured and hidden it.

"Where did it go?" he continued, truculently.

"Just there," said Sheila, pointing to a spot some five yards away from her feet.

"Did you pick it up?"

"Yes."

"Then hand it over."

"No," said Sheila, shaking her dark little head.

"Rot! You must!"

"That's where you're wrong, rude boy. I mustn't and I shan't."

"Why mustn't you?"

"Because Miss Crundall told us to keep it if it came over."

"Oh, she did, did she? I didn't know Ma Crundall kept a school for thieves."

"Go away," said Sheila, returning composedly to her book.

"There'll be a row over this," threatened Hasdrubal.

"Yes, and there'll be a row if you're caught in this garden."

"You needn't think I'm afraid."

"Go away," repeated Sheila; "I don't like you. You're the *rude* Quain boy."

"Cat!" muttered Hasdrubal. He waited a few moments longer to see whether this stinging repartee would have any effect, at the same time

looking vaguely about him on the remote chance of discovering the ball. As Sheila remained entirely unmoved, however, he was at last compelled to return to his own garden empty-handed.

"Got it?" demanded Hannibal.

"No."

"Why not?"

"That beastly dark kid's there. Said Ma Crundall had told them to nick the ball if it came over. She's nicked it, and wouldn't give it up."

"I expect you went the wrong way to work," said Hannibal.

"No, I didn't."

"What did you say?"

"Oh, I told her it was our ball, and that there'd be a jolly row if she didn't hand it over, and that she was a cat."

"I thought so," observed Hannibal; "you've no tact."

"Tact! What's tact?"

"It's a thing that has to be born in you."

"Was it born in you?"

"Yes. If you'd got it, you could do anything you liked with people."

"All right, let's see some of it. I'll bet you you don't get that ball out of that dark kid."

"What'll you bet?"

"Bet you a penny."

"It's worth twopence. The odds are against me. You ought to bet twopence to my penny."

"All right," agreed Hasdrubal. "If you get it, I give you twopence on Saturday. If you don't get it, you give me a penny."

"I make one condition," said Hannibal. "You mustn't interfere in any way or even look over the wall."

"I don't want to look over the wall."

"No, but you might change your mind. Give me the word of the Quains." (This was a sacred oath among the boys, instituted by Hannibal. He had explained that any member of the band who broke it would henceforth forfeit the rights of brotherhood. Needless to say, the oath was always respected.)

"Word of the Quains," growled Hasdrubal, plumping himself down on the grass.

Hannibal mounted the box, and stood there for some little time gazing down into the next garden. Presently he began to whistle an ancient Irish melody — the favorite melody of his father, who was given to playing it on the flute. Hannibal whistled the tune all through twice, and was beginning it for the third time when the boughs of the cedar parted, and a small face, surrounded by dark hair, peeped through.

Hannibal, very politely, raised his cap. As he did so, he smiled. The small face was instantly withdrawn, and the boughs closed. Hannibal went on with the melody. The boughs of the cedar parted a second time, again the little face

peeped through, and then Sheila said: "So you're the boy who whistles my tune?"

"Yes," said Hannibal, gently hoisting himself to the top of the wall.

"Where did you learn it?" asked Sheila.

"My father taught it to me," replied Hannibal, throwing one leg over the wall.

"Is your father Irish?"

"Yes," said Hannibal, throwing the other leg over the wall.

"Then I suppose you're Irish?"

"Yes, I am," agreed Hannibal, quietly dropping into Miss Crundall's garden.

Sheila disappeared behind the branches of the cedar. Hannibal, advancing slowly, at last gained the opening recently occupied by Hasdrubal.

"What are you doing in our garden?" asked Sheila.

"I came to talk to you," said Hannibal.

"But you mustn't, you know."

"Why? Don't you like it?"

"Yes. *I* like it."

"Then I may," said Hannibal.

"Miss Crundall wouldn't like it."

"Miss Crundall isn't here."

"All the same, it's her garden."

"No," explained Hannibal. "It's your garden."

"It belongs to Miss Crundall," corrected Sheila.

"Don't you understand? She owns it."

"Owning a garden doesn't make it yours. The only way to really own a garden is to be the most beautiful thing in it. Is Miss Crundall more beautiful than that rose, for instance?"

"No," said Sheila, with a thoughtful shake of her little dark head.

"Then she can't own the garden."

"I suppose the rose owns it."

"Yes," said Hannibal, "by night."

"Who owns it by day?" asked Sheila, very intent upon a corner of her book.

"When you are in it, you do."

"That's nonsense," said Sheila. "Nobody could be more beautiful than a rose."

"Nobody except you," said Hannibal.

There was a little silence. At last, Sheila looked up. "Why," she asked, "are you so nice, and that brother of yours so horrid?"

"He's not really horrid," said Hannibal. "It's only his manner." (You will observe that he was careful to say nothing this time about tact.)

"Well, it's a horrid manner. That's why I wouldn't let him have the ball."

"What ball?"

"Why, your cricket-ball, you know."

"Oh, yes. I'd forgotten all about that."

"Didn't you come over for it?"

"No. I told you why I came over — to see you."

"Then don't you want the ball?"

"Not if you'd care to keep it," replied Hannibal. He spoke very earnestly, very simply, but his heart, for all that, was in his mouth.

"I don't want it," said Sheila. "It's no use to me, horrid hard thing." She pulled it from under her cushion, and held it out to him. Hannibal advanced, and took it gravely. There wasn't a trace of triumph about him. That would have spoiled everything, and he liked to follow up victory by victory.

"Thanks, awfully," he said. "It's jolly decent of you not to keep it."

"I didn't want to keep it — not really," said Sheila. "I should have felt awfully mean spoiling your game. All the same," she added shyly, "I shouldn't like any of the other girls to know that I let you have it back."

"I won't tell them," promised Hannibal. "We'll make it our secret."

"Yes, that'll be lovely!"

"Of course," Hannibal warned her, "it might come over again sometime."

"I suppose it might," agreed Sheila.

"If it does, may I fetch it?"

"Yes, if the other girls are not here."

"But suppose they are here?"

"Then I'll get it, somehow or other, and throw it back to you without any of them seeing."

"And if they're not here," continued Hannibal,

his blue eyes meeting her dark ones, "then, I suppose —"

"You might as well fetch it," said Sheila.

"You've been a beastly long time," Hasdrubal complained. "I knew you wouldn't make that kid give it up."

"But I did," replied Hannibal, taking the ball from his pocket and shying it across to Hasdrubal.

"Jingo!" said Hasdrubal. Then he added, in a matter-of-fact tone, "I'll pay you that twopence on Saturday."

"That's all right. I'll let you off."

"Straight?"

"Straight."

"You're a brick, Han! I'm your man for always! Word of the Quains!"

Who can doubt that Hannibal had genius?

II

HANNIBAL IN HARNESS

ONE of the commonest mistakes made by the public in estimating the character of the famous Lord London is caused by the simple fact that he has accumulated a vast fortune. They take it for granted that any man who starts with nothing and amasses a million of money before the age of forty must be a person of purely commercial instincts. Those who know Lord London intimately — and to know him at all is to know him intimately — recognize that, but for a sudden and a rather tragic happening, he might have become a professional musician, an actor, a dramatist, a theatrical manager, a war-correspondent, or even a poet.

In the boy Hannibal, there were all these possibilities. He began to write as soon as he could hold a pen, and the back volumes of his school magazines bear witness to his ability for doing himself what he has since set thousands of others doing.

At the age of seventeen, he felt the necessity of exploiting his talents in a greater world than the public school which he attended as a day-scholar. He had a deep affection, an affection shared by

most boys of that day — and, for all one knows to the contrary, by boys of the present day as well — for “The Boy’s Own Paper.” He used to study it, unconsciously, from the editorial point of view. When a new serial was announced, he knew in an instant whether it would prove popular with his school-fellows, or whether they would vote it dull. He knew that the “How-to-Make” series appealed to quite a large number of boys, although, personally, he would not have read one of those articles all through for worlds. He understood the value of the “Answers to Correspondents,” especially when, in reply to a letter written by himself to the Editor, the magic initials “H. Q.” suddenly leapt at him one morning from those wonderful pages. The articles on “Health and Training” he devoured eagerly, having all the passion of the healthy boy for a body in perfect training.

It was quite natural, therefore, when he realized that he must get out of the play-ground into the world, and when this impelling instinct was backed by a hint or two from his father that any addition to the family income would be welcome, that his thoughts should turn to journalism, and, in particular, to a journal for boys.

Thinking things over one night while Hasdrubal snored in the bed in the opposite corner, Hannibal wondered whether “The Boy’s Own Paper” appealed to every boy in the kingdom. If it did,

how was it one didn't see it in the hands of telegraph boys, messenger boys, butcher boys, bakers' boys, and the rest of the tribe who swarmed about the streets of London? He speedily convinced himself that there must be some reason why these boys did not all buy and devour "The Boy's Own Paper." And then he began to perceive that "The Boy's Own Paper" catered only for boys of his own class. The stories of Talbot Baines Reed, for example, always dealt with life at a public school. What did these other thousands of boys know of life at a public school? Then, again, the "How-to-Make" series could have but faint interest for a boy who could not possibly hope to purchase one quarter of the tools and materials mentioned in those articles.

A great idea came to Hannibal that night — the first of his great ideas. He would contrive, by hook or by crook, to get an interview with some rich man whose business it was to publish weekly papers, and he would convince this man that there was a very large fortune to be made by anybody who would bring out a journal on the lines of "The Boy's Own Paper," but adapted to the every-day thoughts and tastes and needs and hopes and doubts and difficulties of the boy in the street. His brain hummed. He was so excited that he had to get out of bed, and go across to the window. It was quite clear to him that such a paper would meet with a ready response. The type of serial

story that could fascinate the errand-boy was vivid in his mind. He could see the title and the illustrations. He would tell them how to turn their pocket-money to the best account, how to teach themselves things which they had not learned at school, how to make money and get on in the world. His paper — he thought of it already as his paper — would come like a weekly blaze of light into these submerged lives. He wanted to dress at once, and go downstairs, and get pens and paper, and draft out the model of his first number. He could not bear the thought of going to bed again, and deliberately allowing this stupendous scheme to slip from his mind.

He actually did this. Just as the child Handel was discovered in his little nightshirt playing the organ, so the young Quain, at four o'clock on a winter's morning, stole downstairs in his shirt and trousers and prepared his first "dummy." There, at half-past six, the general servant found him, the dining-room table strewn with sheets of paper torn from an exercise-book.

"Lor! Master Hannibal, whatever are you doing here at this time in the morning?"

"Nothing, Lizzie. It's a secret. You mustn't tell anybody."

"As if I should. But you do look cold! You must be pretty nigh froze!"

"Yes, I am a bit cold. I'll help you light the fire, and then we'll make some tea."

We have all seen pictures of the child Handel at the organ, and pictures of young George Stephenson watching the lid of the kettle bobbing up and down. An equally good picture might be made, one imagines, of the great Lord London helping the maid-of-all-work to light the dining-room fire at half-past six on a winter's morning, while the table is strewn with sheets of paper that, for those who had eyes to see, bore eloquent testimony to the arrival of a new genius in journalism.

Sir Albert Curtain sat at the head of a long table in the editorial room of "The London Weekly Album." The table was littered with original drawings by famous artists, wood-engravings, proofs of blocks, manuscripts of stories by celebrated novelists, long galley-slips just up from the composing-room, pens, pencils, scribbling paper, paper-weights, rulers, scissors, sealing-wax, note-paper, envelopes, opened letters, unopened letters, and the other delightful riffraff so dear to the heart of the born journalist. Gathered about him were the chiefs of the various departments — the publisher, the foreman printer, the art editor, and, most weighty of all, the advertising manager. A special number was under consideration — one of those huge special numbers of the "London Weekly Album," which was afterwards to be found in clubs, in hotels, in the billiard-rooms of the wealthy, in the drawing-rooms of the less

wealthy, in hospitals, in camps, on steamers, and in log huts thousands of miles away.

A messenger entered with a card which he handed to the Chief. "By appointment, sir," said the messenger.

The great Sir Albert frowned as he looked at the card. "Mr. Hannibal Quain," he muttered, hastily. "Who on earth is Mr. Hannibal Quain?"

"I think," said Sir Albert's obsequious private secretary, "that that is the gentleman who wrote to you with reference to an idea for a new paper. The wording of the letter attracted you, sir, if you remember."

"Oh, yes. I thought we asked him to forward the idea?"

"Yes, sir, we did, but Mr. Quain replied that his idea could only be properly explained in a personal interview."

Sir Albert smiled, and those about him smiled also. Mr. Quain was evidently unaware that "The London Weekly Album," like the Bank of England, was above suspicion.

"Tell him to wait, Truth," he said.

Hannibal was quite happy in the waiting-room. Indeed, he was in a veritable delirium of happiness. The smell of the printer's ink was in his nostrils, and the roar of the great machines was in his ears. The building actually shook with the thunder of the machines. The room in which he

waited was dark enough, and small enough, and untidy enough, but he felt like one on the threshold of Paradise.

For the first time in his life, he found himself in a real newspaper-office. This was the place where the famous "London Weekly Album" was actually written, and illustrated, and edited, and printed, and bound, and sent forth to the world. There were bound volumes of the "London Weekly Album" on the shelves in front of him. There were all sorts of mysterious packages tucked away on other shelves. There were some framed drawings on the walls, real drawings sent by men whose names were known all over the world.

The door stood open, and people kept passing to and fro. Once two men met in the passage, and one addressed the other as "Stanley, old boy." This must be the great Stanley — the famous war-correspondent who had been through fifteen campaigns, and whose picture, cut from the pages of "The Boy's Own Paper," was nailed to the wall above Hannibal's bed. Hannibal ventured to take a peep through the crack of the door. Yes, that was Stanley, older than he expected, shorter than he expected, rather less distinguished-looking than he appeared in his picture, but, for all that, the great man himself. Oh, day of days!

And he was to wait and see the great Sir Albert Curtain! He was to talk to him, as one man to

another, and lay before him the scheme for his new paper. It had been rather a wrench having those cards printed — one-and-nine pence for fifty — but it was worth while. If you wanted to impress people you had to spend money. There was no doubt about it. Sir Albert must have been impressed by the card or he would not have told him to wait. Well, the gate of a great Career stood open; if he did not pass through that gate and join the throng, hurrying and jostling and scrambling along the narrow crowded way to Success, it would be his own fault.

An hour passed. Two hours passed. Hannibal saw by his Waterbury watch that the time was half-past two. Did this great man never take luncheon? Perhaps not. Perhaps they were too busy. He imagined Sir Albert directing, and exhorting, and criticizing, and rejecting, and inspiring like one possessed of a thousand sources of energy. Lunch? Ridiculous!

The office had grown strangely quiet. If Sir Albert himself was not at lunch, it would seem that the rest of the staff was lunching. Hannibal peeped through the open door of the waiting-room into the passage; not a soul in sight. He stole a little way down the passage; still he met nobody. A little further, and he came to a door upon which was painted

“ SIR ALBERT CURTAIN ”

The door was ajar. No sound of voices from the room — not even the scratch of a pen. In spite of himself, impelled by some over-mastering power which he has never understood, Hannibal gently pushed open the door and entered the sanctum of sanctums.

At one end of the great table, amid all the fascinating litter, stood the remains of a very simple cold luncheon. In a large arm-chair by the fire, his feet comfortably resting on a club-fender, lay Sir Albert, fast asleep. Fascinated by the sight, Hannibal stood just inside the door, gazing at the man who had it in his power to pass him through the gateway that led to fame and fortune. Asleep! Fast asleep! And so the Proprietor and Editor of this world-famous periodical could actually sleep! The roar of his machines disturbed him not, nor the knowledge that he had an appointment with Mr. Hannibal Quain.

Hannibal decided that something must be done and done quickly. Picking a scrap of paper from the floor, he rolled it into a tiny pellet, and flicked it neatly at the nose of the great man. The pellet hit the mark, and Sir Albert, after various preliminary gruntlings, awoke. Fortunately for Hannibal, he did not know the cause of his awakening. All he knew was that a strange youth, with a rather pale face, and fair straight hair brushed slant-wise across his forehead, stood in the doorway staring at him.

"Who the devil are you?" asked Sir Albert sleepily.

"Hannibal Quain, sir."

"D'you want to see me?"

"Yes, sir. I have an appointment with you. You told me to wait."

"Quain? Quain? Oh, yes, I know — the suspicious gentleman."

"Suspicious, sir?"

"The gentleman who would not commit the idea for his new paper to writing. Or are you his son?"

"No, sir. There is only one Hannibal Quain."

Sir Albert laughed. It was a good thing for Hannibal that he had made the great Sir Albert laugh. Most of the people in the office of "The London Weekly Album" were far too terrified of Sir Albert even to dream of attempting to make him laugh, and, if one of them did ever get so far as to venture the attempt, the result was so ghastly that Sir Albert generally set him down in his mind as a hopeless fool who could never be entrusted with any responsible position.

"Oh, so there's no other Hannibal Quain?"

"No, sir. I'm afraid you may think my name rather eccentric, but my father gave us all names like that. He says that if he can't send us out into the world with great fortunes at our backs, we shall at least start with great names. Would

you care to hear the names of my brothers? ”

“ Certainly! ” replied Sir Albert, laughing again. “ Sit down.”

Hannibal, before accepting the invitation to sit down, closed the door behind him. This at once placed him on terms of intimacy with Sir Albert, and lent greater importance to the business to be transacted.

“ My second brother,” he said, “ is called Hasdrubal; the third, Socrates; the fourth, Virgil; the fifth, Galahad; the sixth, Anthony; and the seventh, Ajax.”

“ Is that the lot? ”

“ Yes, sir. That’s all — at present.”

“ So you are the eldest of seven, Mr. Quain? ”

“ Yes, sir.”

“ I hope your father is a rich man? ”

“ No, sir. We’re not very well off.”

“ Is your father a journalist? ”

“ No, sir — a barrister.”

“ And what put it into your head that you wanted to be a journalist? ”

“ I don’t quite know, sir. I’ve always been fond of writing, and I was the editor of my school magazine, and then the idea for this paper came into my head, and I thought you would be the most likely person to consider it, and so I wrote you that letter.”

“ Well, would you care to entrust me with the idea, Mr. Quain? ”

“Of course, sir. It wasn’t that I distrusted you, but I knew that I could explain it better to you personally, if I was lucky enough to get the chance to see you, than just in writing. There are so many things. . . .”

“I know. Well, Mr. Quain, go ahead.”

“It’s a new paper for boys. Of course, I know there’s the ‘B. O. P.,’ but it seems to me that that only appeals to a certain class of boy. My paper would be intended for all the boys that one sees about in the streets — errand-boys, messenger-boys, telegraph-boys, and so on. In fact, all the boys who go to the Board School.”

“Yes,” said Sir Albert. (Hannibal’s heart jumped.) “But boys who go to Board Schools, Mr. Quain, don’t buy papers.” Hannibal’s heart sank.

“I know they don’t at present, sir, but that’s just it! They would — I know they would, if there was a paper to suit them! The only thing is that nobody seems to understand them, or to care to take the trouble to understand them. I do understand them — I know I do, and my paper would be so fascinating to them that they wouldn’t be able to help buying it!

“For example; look at those serial stories in the ‘B. O. P.’; they are all about Public Schools. These boys don’t know anything about Public Schools, and so why should they be expected to take an interest in a story about life at a Public

School? I should give them stories about fighting, and about travel, and about poor boys who went to sea and got wrecked, and discovered wonderful treasures on undiscovered islands, and came home very wealthy, and were knighted, and married peeresses, and went into Parliament, and became Prime Minister! That's what they'd like!

“And then I should have articles telling them how to get on in the world, even if they didn't go abroad — how to train themselves for positions of importance, how to make money in their spare hours, how to double it, how to treble it, how to get rich! And then there'd be historical stories! Those chaps know hardly anything of the wonderful history of England! They can't get it out of history-books — all the history-books I've ever come across leave out all the things that they ought to put in, and stop just where they ought to begin. Look at the 'South Sea Bubble' — what a story might be made out of that! Look at the building of St. Paul's Cathedral — no history-book ever tells us how that was done! Look at Lord Nelson — not one boy in a hundred has really any idea of what Lord Nelson was even like!

“And then there'd be 'Answers to Correspondents.' If they had any particular trouble, or there was anything they particularly wanted to know about, they'd just write up to the paper and we should tell them! Then we should have plenty of colored pictures! That's what boys like

— colored pictures! Why, *all* the pictures might be colored! We could knock the dear old ‘B. O. P.’ into a cocked hat!”

Hannibal paused for breath. He found himself, somehow or other, in the middle of the room, with his arms extended, and his long fringe very much over his left eye. He supposed that he had been making a fool of himself, but, anyway, he had told the great Sir Albert about his paper. That was better than keeping it bottled up inside himself.

Sir Albert was still smiling, but he was also regarding his youthful visitor with real interest. He knew something of the enthusiasm of youth, but this fair-haired lad had more of it than anybody who had ever brought him an idea for a new paper.

“That’s all very interesting, Mr. Quain, but now I must damp your ardor a little. I am a practical man, and I know something of the cost of running an illustrated paper. You say that boys like colored pictures, and I have no doubt that they do. They are not alone in that respect. Everybody likes colored pictures — if they’re good pictures, well colored, and well printed. You may think it very stupid of us, for instance, not to print the whole of the ‘London Weekly Album’ in colors. I don’t mind telling you, Mr. Quain, that I would do it to-morrow if I could afford it, but colored printing, at this stage of the game,

is ruinously expensive. If I brought out a paper for boys printed throughout in colors, or with even a portion of it printed in colors, I should very soon be in the Bankruptcy Court.

“Now take the question of your serial stories. I like your ideas for serial stories, but you do not realize, I am afraid, that these stories would have to be very well written. They would have to be written by men of experience, and men of experience are not prepared to work for nothing. Take, again, your ‘Answers to Correspondents.’ An excellent idea, Mr. Quain, but you would require quite a large staff of people to deal with that department alone. Now, the question is, how are all these expenses to be met? What would the circulation of your paper be? Have you thought of that?”

“No, sir,” poor Hannibal was obliged to confess, “I didn’t actually think of any figure, but I am sure we should sell an awful lot.”

Sir Albert laughed. “You are, are you? Well, I don’t say we shouldn’t, but one thing that you must learn about journalism, Mr. Quain, one thing that you must get firmly fixed inside your head, if you ever want to do anything as a journalist, is this: no paper can be made to pay on circulation alone. The only way in which a paper can be run at a profit is to have a big revenue behind it from advertisements. You may imagine that people who have anything to sell are only

too glad to advertise in any paper that has a large circulation, but that is not the case. If you think the matter over for one second, you will easily see the point of view of the advertiser. He asks himself, not how many copies of a paper are sold, but what sort of people buy the paper? Is the paper bought by people who have money to spend? Now, your errand-boys have no money to spend; therefore, it is no use for the advertiser to tell them what he has to sell; therefore, we should not get much revenue from advertisements, and we should make a loss of our venture. Is that quite clear? ”

“ Yes, sir,” said Hannibal. It was quite clear — only too clear.

Sir Albert, in five minutes, had shattered his beautiful castle. It was Hannibal’s first setback, and the first setback is always the hardest to bear. Success in journalism was not so easy as he had imagined. In point of fact, it came to him as a horrible shock that he knew nothing whatever about the subject. He could not be expected to realize, at the tender age of seventeen, that he was learning with exceptional rapidity.

“ Don’t look so glum, Mr. Quain,” Sir Albert continued. “ There may be something in your idea, but I warn you that the paper will have to be run on very cheap lines. Have you any notion what your editorial expenses would amount to weekly? ”

Hannibal, of course, hadn't a notion. But, come what might, he mustn't confess that.

"Oh," he said quickly, "about ten pounds."

"Ten pounds, eh? Does that include editorial salaries?"

"Oh, yes, sir. Mine would be the only editorial salary. I should do it all myself."

"Oh, you would, would you? You're not lacking in pluck, Mr. Quain. Well, I'll think the matter over, and write to you in a few days' time. Good afternoon."

Hannibal took up his hat and got out of the room as quickly as he could. Even this slight action was a point in his favor. Business men like an interview to end when it is ended. They have neither the time nor the inclination for ceremonial leave-takings. Many people, especially ladies, make the mistake of trying to further their cause in a few final words, overlooking the fact that the business man to whom they have been talking would not terminate the interview unless he was quite sure that he had heard all that there was to hear. Reiterated statements only bore him, and stamp the visitor as an amateur.

"Stand not upon the order of your going, but go at once." There is an excellent motto for everybody who wants to get something out of a man of affairs. Hannibal had acted upon it by instinct. The great Lord London owes nine-

tenths of everything that he has done and everything that he possesses to instinct.

What did Sir Albert mean by "a few days?"

Hannibal put it down at three days. Three whole days and three whole nights seemed a terrible time to wait. There were six posts a day in St. John's Wood; eighteen times the postman must call before he could hope for any end to this awful suspense. He could not even relieve his mind by talking on the subject, for he had kept his visit to the offices of the "London Weekly Album" a profound secret from everybody, even Hasdrubal. If nothing came of the matter — sickening thought! — he would be spared a certain amount of humiliation. Lizzie, the servant, was his only confidante, and Lizzie had forgotten all about it long ago in the maze of step-washing, and door-answering, and table-laying, and table-clearing, and bed-making, and washing-up, and boot-blackening.

On the morning of the fourth day, Hannibal met the postman nearly a quarter of a mile from the house.

"Good-morning, postman," he said airily. "Anything for me?"

"No. Three for yer Pa, two for yer Ma, and that's all."

"Are you sure?"

"O' course I'm sure."

Oh, well, there were five more posts that day.

Sir Albert was a business man, and the letter would surely come by one of those five posts. If it didn't, there was still the next day, and the day after that, and the day after that.

But a whole week went by, bringing no letter from the great man. Hannibal's mother noticed that the boy looked pale, and insisted on his taking some medicine. She also rebuked him for hanging too much about the house, and secretly wondered whether he was in love. (Hannibal, as a matter of fact, was in love, but Sheila had left Miss Crundall's seminary three months ago, and was safely at home in her father's Warwickshire Rectory.)

At the end of a fortnight, Hannibal felt compelled to communicate with Sir Albert Curtain, reminding him of his promise. But how should this be done? If he wrote a letter, it would be opened by Sir Albert's private secretary, and might never reach Sir Albert himself. In the meantime, there would be more suspense. He dare not telephone; besides, the telephone in those days was not even installed in every newspaper-office, far less was it accessible at every street corner. He might, of course, call, but again his instinct warned him that this would be rather like boiling his cabbages twice. It would be an anti-climax.

At last he hit upon the plan of sending a pre-paid telegram. He had not much left in the way of pocket-money after paying for the cards, but

he had heard of people in need of temporary assistance raising money at pawn-shops. On a certain morning, then, behold the future Lord London timidly passing beneath the three golden balls, and pushing across a counter, for the inspection of a grinning young Hebrew, his silver watch and chain, won the year previously in a cycling race.

"How much can you let me have on this?" he asked as carelessly as possible.

"Want to sell it?"

"No. I only want to pawn it."

"Five bob."

"Only five shillings! It's solid silver!"

"Silver ain't worth anything nowadays."

"Really? And — and how much would it be worth if I sold it?"

"Six bob."

"Is that all?"

"'Ow many times must I tell yer!"

He felt like punching the wretched creature's face across the counter, but that would not have been at all wise. In addition to the probable appearance in the police-court, and the fine, and the costs, and the anger of his father, and the grief of his mother, his name would appear in the papers, and Sir Albert Curtain might see it.

He had no objection to his name appearing in the papers as often as he could contrive to get it there, but not as the assailant of an unfortunate

Jew boy in a Soho pawn-shop. Swallowing his anger, therefore, he merely said:

“ I’ll pawn it. Give me the five shillings.”

This was the wire that he dispatched, ten minutes later, to Sir Albert:

“ Greatly astonished not to have heard from you. Must approach another firm Monday next.

“ HANNIBAL QUAIN.”

He prepaid the reply, having filled in the address after his name with great care. Then he hurried home, and was met on the door-step by Hasdrubal, Socrates, Virgil, Galahad, and Anthony. Ajax, who found it better to come to anchor on all occasions rather than run the risk of buffeting by fraternal waves, was seated on the lowest stair.

“ There’s a telegram for you, Han ! ” screamed the chorus.

“ Oh, is there ? ” replied Hannibal, with admirable calmness.

“ Has wanted to open it,” announced Virgil, “ but Soc and I wouldn’t let him.”

“ You ! ” scoffed Hasdrubal. “ I could take you and Soc on together and give you a jolly good hiding ! ”

“ Brag,” said Soc, quietly.

“ Oh, dry up ! ” commanded Hannibal, and they dried up forthwith. “ Where’s my telegram ? ”

It was eventually found and handed to him — a sadly crumpled affair, looking more like a piece of battered orange-peel than a telegram. Hannibal, easily foiling the attempts of the brothers to peep at the message, opened it and read as follows:

“Please call Monday at twelve.”

“CURTAIN.”

He crumpled the whole thing up in his fist, and shoved it into his trouser-pocket. Then he pushed through his brothers, and strode into the garden. They thought that his conduct was due to mere cockiness because he had received a telegram. Little they knew! Such temperaments as his are hardened by failure, softened by success. Hannibal strode into the garden because he was ashamed to let them see the sudden mist that had come into his eyes. . . .

All that day, and for many days to come, he had to keep his coat buttoned lest they should miss the silver watch and chain.

It will not be necessary to relate in detail the second interview between Hannibal and Sir Albert Curtain.

Sir Albert, to tell the truth, still adhered to his original opinion that there was not very much chance of making money out of a weekly paper for errand-boys. Still, there were things in Hannibal's favor. Sir Albert's machines were not

fully occupied in printing the "London Weekly Album"; the paper, and the illustrations, and the literary matter for the new journal could be kept down to a very small figure; it would not hurt the regular staff to have a little more work on their shoulders; and there were several rooms in the rather rambling building that had not as yet been turned to account. But the element that weighed most with Sir Albert was the enthusiasm and obvious cleverness of Hannibal himself. He saw that, given proper encouragement and opportunity and guidance, the boy would go far. And he knew the difficulty of finding really able young men for editorial work. There were plenty of young men who could bring out a paper, but the young man he was looking for — and the young man that every intelligent proprietor of a newspaper is looking for — was the young man who can not only bring out his paper, but can lend to every page that inspired something which is best known in journalism as *flair*.

Hannibal, he had seen almost at a glance, had *flair*; it was quite worth while to give him his head, within reasonable limits, to see how he would shape.

Behold Mr. Hannibal Quain, therefore, installed as editor in the editorial room of the "Boy's Chum." Sir Albert had taken him at his word, and Hannibal constituted the entire editorial staff.

The sum allowed him for editorial expenses was twelve pounds per week. In return for this, he had to find two or three clever young men to write his stories and articles; he had to find two or three clever young men to do his drawings: the "Answers to Correspondents," storyettes, jokes, verses, riddles, health hints, worldly advice, and instruction in practical economics he did himself.

There were always the back numbers of the "London Weekly Album" to draw upon, there were always plenty of American papers about the office, and it was always possible to use nice little pieces from other London and provincial papers in return for the courtesy of an acknowledgment.

Whatever he contrived to save out of the twelve pounds, Hannibal had for himself by way of salary. It must ever be to his credit that his salary did little more than pay for his 'bus fares and his lunch. Some boys would have been foolish enough to enrich themselves at the expense of the editorial columns, but Hannibal was too far-seeing for that. After all, he still lived at home, and had little need to think too seriously of the future.

It may be said at once that the "Boy's Chum" never leaped into tremendous favor with the public. Hannibal, once inside the office, found Sir Albert a very difficult person to see; whenever he did succeed in obtaining an interview, however, he swiftly proceeded to point out that his paper

could not be expected to thrive on an editorial allowance of twelve pounds a week.

“What more do you want?” Sir Albert would reply.

“In the first place, sir, I want to give away at least ten pounds a week in prizes. Then I want to secure a serial story by one of the really big writers. I want to have picture-posters on the hoardings. I want to have a good colored plate at least once a month. I want —”

“Yes, Mr. Quain, I know you want all these things, and now I’ll tell you what I want. Before I give you any more money to spend, I want to see your paper turn the corner and begin to show a profit. You may think that I’m one of the old school; I daresay I am, but old school or new school, there is no sense in throwing good money after bad. When I see a more definite inclination on the part of your public to buy your paper, you shall have colored plates, and prizes, and posters, and all the rest of it, but don’t ask me for any more money until that happens. You needn’t think I’m not watching you; I’m watching you very carefully, and I read your paper myself every week. There are some good things in it and there are some bad things in it, but Rome was not built in a day, and I don’t expect to be able to put old heads on young shoulders. Come to me again at the end of the year, and we will have another talk.”

With these well-meant and kindly observations, Hannibal had to be content. After all, he was getting more and more experience every day; he thoroughly enjoyed the atmosphere of the office; he was a little king among his staff; and the paper continued to appear. It even increased, slowly, in circulation, and, at the end of two years, might possibly have developed into a permanent success but for the sudden and rather tragic happening mentioned at the beginning of this chapter.

On returning home from the office one evening, he was met outside the house by Hasdrubal, who informed him that their father was dead.

III

SHEILA

HANNIBAL was taken by his mother to look upon the face of his father for the last time. In common with most young people, he had never thought much about death. When he did think of it, it was as something that happened in other families, and in other houses, and to other people, but was very remote from his own family and his own house and home. As he stood by the bedside, gazing upon the face of his dead father, he was surprised to find how very little emotion was stirred in him by this occurrence. The two had never been very near together; his father was rather a dreamy man, rather aloof, rather difficult to know well.

It seemed to Hannibal that he had just fallen asleep, and would not wake again. That very simple and very hackneyed thought really was his prevailing impression.

But when he came down-stairs, having left his mother kneeling by the side of the bed, and saw his six young brothers in more or less forlorn attitudes in the dining-room, it suddenly came to him what the death of his father meant. This was another of the great determining moments in

Hannibal's life. He realized, quite clearly and yet without panic, that the future existence of these six boys depended upon him. It was impossible to say as yet how they would develop, but he knew, even then, that, so long as he lived, he would be the leader and chief mainstay of the family.

The thought did not depress him. On the contrary, he was conscious of a strange new strength flowing into him at every pore, so that he might almost have been said to exult in this opportunity of showing and testing his strength.

Plans for the future came and went in his head. As he stood there, he made up his mind that he could not afford to spend any more time in the editorial room of the "Boy's Chum." He must do something much bigger, much bolder, much more remunerative. These mouths had to be fed, but he did not stop at that. These boys must be educated — yes, and educated a great deal better than he had been educated.

Hasdrubal, for example, had just left school; he must go back for another year at least. His brothers were gentlemen born, and they ought to take up in the world the rightful positions of gentlemen. It had fallen to him, and him alone, to do these things for them.

His brain was very busy during the days before the funeral. No sooner was that unnecessarily depressing ceremony over than he announced to

his mother his intention of being absent from home for the week-end.

“Where are you going?”

“I would rather not tell you, Mother.”

“You have never concealed anything from me before, Hannibal.”

“Oh, yes, I have, Mother — lots of things.”

“Important things?”

“Yes. Quite important things. For example, I didn't tell you anything about my present berth until it was all fixed up.”

“You have never been away from home before without my knowing where you were going.”

“That's true, Mother. But I'm nineteen now, and the head of the family. You must allow me to make certain decisions for myself. If you don't, I shall become dependent upon your judgment, and about as much use in the world as the average man.”

“You think yourself stronger, then, than the average man?”

“I know I am,” said Hannibal simply.

On Saturday morning he had to go to his office. On Saturday afternoon, he mounted his bicycle, and took the Uxbridge Road. (He was quite a notable amateur bicyclist.) The roads were perfect for riding, and the thoughts that buzzed and sang in his brain were powerful enough to have driven the machine almost without the aid of a sturdy pair of legs.

He sailed through Henley-on-Thames, left Oxford in the lurch, and at seven o'clock, jumped down before a little wayside inn half a mile from Chipping Norton. Here he refreshed himself with a couple of boiled eggs, plenty of bread and butter and water-cress, and two large cups of tea.

It was growing dusk when he started off again, but he had ridden over the road in more than one race, and knew it well. Two hours more, and he was wheeling his machine up the drive of Clinton Bagot Rectory, the home of the Reverend Peter Gillfoyle, Mrs. Gillfoyle, and their daughter, Sheila.

It was half-past nine, and Mr. Gillfoyle and Sheila were intent upon a final game of chess. A ring at the bell at that time of night in this quiet country place was a novelty, and they stopped playing while the maid went to open the door. Mrs. Gillfoyle, who was dozing over a novel by the fireside, became suddenly alert.

"Mr. Quain to see you, sir."

"Mr. *who?*" asked Mr. and Mrs. Gillfoyle in chorus.

Sheila said nothing, but her heart began to beat in an uncomfortably rapid manner.

"Mr. Quain, sir. He's come from London on his bicycle, and I've shown him into the study."

"Quain?" echoed Mrs. Gillfoyle. "Isn't that the name of the curious gentleman who lived next

door to Miss Crundall's, Sheila, and used to play the flute? "

" Yes," said Sheila, " I think it is."

" What on earth can he be doing down here? " continued Mrs. Gillfoyle, staring at the parlor-maid as though she had exceeded her duties in making such a strange announcement.

" Perhaps I'd better go and see," suggested Mr. Gillfoyle, without stirring.

" Shall I go? " volunteered Sheila, " I think I know him slightly."

" Perhaps you'd better, dear," agreed her mother. " I don't like your father to have exciting interviews on Saturdays."

Sheila slipped out of the room, taking care to close the door behind her. If she expected Mr. Quain the elder, it was very nice and thoughtful of her to pause for a full minute in front of the hall-glass. As a matter of fact, however, faithful Hannah had given her the straight tip.

" It's not an old gentleman, Miss; it's a young gentleman, and he's very nice looking, with fair 'air, and all over dust! "

" His head! " exclaimed Sheila. " Has he had an accident? "

" No, miss, not his 'ead — only his clo'es."

" Oh, all right. You needn't wait, Hannah."

Hannah returned to the kitchen with the stimulating intelligence, while Sheila composed her

pretty features, and then sailed into the study as calmly and indifferently as though one of the villagers had called to arrange about the time of a baptism.

"Mr. Quain?"

"Yes. Don't pretend you don't remember me, Sheila."

"I think I do. But you mustn't call me that."

"Why not? I'm not any different. Are you?"

"Yes. Can't you see?"

"You mean your hair?"

"And my skirts. I'm grown up."

"That's a good job."

"Why?"

"Because I've come to ask you to marry me."

Even Sheila was silenced by this, but only for one moment. The next, she burst into a ringing laugh that caused her father to raise his eyebrows, and made her mother sit up uneasily in her chair.

"Well, you really are the quaintest boy in the world! D'you really mean to say that you jumped on your bicycle and dashed down here through all this dust, without any warning whatever, and without knowing father or mother, and without even asking if you might come, to say that?"

"Yes," replied Hannibal. "What would have been the good of asking? They wouldn't have understood in a letter — people never do. If

they turn me out, I shall go to the inn and ride back to-morrow."

"Oh," said Sheila, "I don't think they'll turn you out. All the same, it's a little — Quainish, isn't it?"

"Yes," Hannibal agreed; "but then I'm Quain, you see."

"Are you awfully proud of that?"

"Not so very as yet, but I'm going to be, and so are you."

"You needn't be so cross. I wasn't trying to snub you."

"I know that. I'm not a bit cross."

"You spoke in a very fiery way."

"That's different. I feel fiery. I'm all on fire inside my head."

"I'm sorry to hear that."

"Why?"

"Because — because it must be very uncomfortable."

"That isn't why you're sorry. You've just thought of that."

"Why am I sorry, then?"

"Because — you thought I didn't really mean what I said just now."

"What about?"

"About wanting you to marry me."

"What a frightfully conceited remark!"

"Not at all. You don't follow. I don't say that you want to marry me, but, even if you don't,

you wouldn't like to think that my asking you was merely the result of a fit of temporary insanity, would you? "

"That's very clever."

"Yes, I am clever. And so are you. That's partly why I want you to marry me. We could achieve almost anything."

"I don't want to be married because I'm clever."

"All the other things are implied."

"What things? "

"Oh, you know — tact, and — and all that. All the things that make you the Right Person."

"You haven't said a word about my looks."

"No, because that's so silly. Look here, Sheila — I *shall* call you Sheila! — as you said just now, I think a good deal of my own gifts and abilities. I shouldn't ask you to marry me unless I thought you would be able to keep pace with me. Don't let's waste time fooling each other. Life's too short. If you don't want to marry me, say so, and I'll get on my bicycle and go back to London."

"I'm not going to be rushed into it."

"That's the only way. People who consider and consider and consider, never do anything. I've got a big scheme on hand, and I want to get to work on it. My father's dead, and I've got a mother and six brothers to keep. Well, I could get to work with my scheme without you, but I

could do it twice as well with you. Are you going to hang about down here amongst the cabbages and turnips and these moldy old villagers, or are you coming up to London to plunge into the full tide of it with me and take our chance among the breakers? It'll be a struggle, a hard struggle, and we may go under, but, by Jove, it'll be exciting! Well, what do you say? Will you come or won't you?"

At this point in the conversation, the door opened again, and Mrs. Gillfoyle entered.

"What a long time you are, Sheila, my dear. How do you do, Mr. Quain? What a long ride you have had! I've told Cook to cut you some sandwiches. Can you eat beef or would you prefer ham? We have some ham in the house, but I think beef better for you at this time of night. It's more easily digested. I'm sure your mother would say the same. Is she quite well?"

"Yes, quite, thank you," replied Hannibal, suddenly realizing that his task was not going to be very easy. There was something in the manner of this quiet, motherly old lady which suggested a tremendous power of resistance.

"You haven't told me yet whether you can eat beef sandwiches," continued Mrs. Gillfoyle.

"Oh, thank you very much; I can eat anything."

Mrs. Gillfoyle smiled. There was a quiet roguishness in her smile.

"I'm not asking you to eat 'anything,' Mr. Quain. It's very nice beef. We have a good butcher here. My husband is most particular about his food. Go and see if the sandwiches are ready, Sheila, and, if they are, bring them in." (Sheila went.) "I'm having a bed prepared for you, Mr. Quain. You'll stay the night, of course?"

"Well, Mrs. Gillfoyle," said Hannibal, resolutely, "I'm not quite sure."

"Then think it over," replied the old lady, quite undisturbed. "It won't do Hannah any harm to make up a bed. She's getting very fat and lazy. Does your mother find much difficulty in getting good servants?"

"You must excuse me, Mrs. Gillfoyle, but I really haven't time to discuss the servant problem. I have come down from London with a specific object in view. Don't you think I had better tell you what it is?"

"Why not?" replied Mrs. Gillfoyle, soothingly.

"I have come to ask your daughter to be my wife."

"Of course you have," said Mrs. Gillfoyle, composedly smoothing out her dress and regarding Hannibal with the same roguish smile, her head a little on one side, her mouth a little bit down at the corners, and her eye-lids slightly lowered.

"I'm glad you're not surprised."

"Why should I be surprised? Young people are always doing these sort of things."

This was rather a staggerer for Hannibal, who had felt, up to this point, that he was carrying the thing through with an unusual amount of originality and dash. He had not expected to meet so formidable an opponent as Mrs. Gillfoyle. The disconcerting part of it was that she didn't look at all formidable; she just looked a plump, smiling, good-natured, easy, tender-hearted, unsophisticated, motherly old body. That smile put young Hannibal on his mettle. He determined to astonish the old lady at all costs.

"I suppose," he said, "we could be married almost at once by special license?"

"I suppose you could," agreed Mrs. Gillfoyle, her head still well on one side.

"Wednesday, for example?"

"Oh, quite by Wednesday."

"It would be nice if Mr. Gillfoyle performed the ceremony, I think."

"Very nice."

"Would you wish it to be a quiet affair?"

"I think so. I don't like a lot of people trampling about. It's bad enough when the Bishop comes down for the confirmation, once every three years. Have you been confirmed, Mr. Quain?"

"Of course," said Hannibal, very annoyed.

"That's a good thing. It makes people so

self-conscious when they have to be confirmed after they're grown up. That's why I'm always so sorry for dissenters; they baptize them, I believe, when they are quite men and women; I have heard that they push them right into the water. It must be very disconcerting."

"Very," Hannibal agreed. "If you don't mind, Mrs. Gillfoyle, I should like to get back to the original question."

"I was rather under the impression," observed the old lady, "that *I* was asking questions. Still, you talk as long as you like, Mr. Quain. I like to hear the voices of young people; they're so fresh."

"I don't think I have anything more to say, Mrs. Gillfoyle, thank you. With your permission, I shall return to London to-morrow to make the necessary arrangements."

"Oh, why not wait till Monday? My husband doesn't approve of Sunday cycling. Besides, I want you to hear him preach. He's a little dull in the morning, but that's only to be expected. Most men are. He wakes up in the evening — we have a better congregation, and the lights tend to excite him — and then he tells some delightful anecdotes."

"I'm quite sure he does," said Hannibal, with an attempt to meet the old lady on her own ground. "Good anecdotes are always interesting, are they not?"

"Yes, especially when you haven't heard them before. I have been hearing my husband's anecdotes, in the pulpit and out of it, for nearly forty years. That is where you would have the advantage of me. Youth is a difficult time of life, Mr. Quain, but it has its compensations. How old are you?"

"Nineteen. But I'm older than most fellows of my own age."

"Oh, don't apologize, Mr. Quain. I was married when I was seventeen."

"The same age as Sheila!"

"Yes, the same age as Sheila."

"By the way, have you been engaged to her long?"

"Only about ten minutes."

"Ah. Well, I'm not a believer in long engagements. . . . Here are the sandwiches. I hope you'll find that Cook has put sufficient mustard in them. If not, you must ask for more. I like my guests to be quite comfortable and at home. Sheila, my dear, Mr. Quain tells me that he wishes to marry you on Wednesday. Will that be convenient?"

"Certainly not," replied Sheila.

"There," said Mrs. Gillfoyle. "I was afraid there might be complications. The longer you live, Mr. Quain, the more you'll find how difficult it is to get people to do exactly what you want without making complications. Have another lit-

tle talk with Sheila while I go and send my husband to bed. He always has a warm bath on Saturday nights, and I like to see that everything is made nice and comfortable for him. Don't forget to eat your sandwiches, and don't eat them too fast. If you would like a glass of beer, Sheila will get it for you. Take the peg out of the barrel, darling, and don't forget to put it back, because otherwise the beer gets flat and then the servants grumble. If you prefer tea, Mr. Quain, I will have some made for you. I never think it wise to drink tea when you are eating meat; they say that it turns the meat to leather. I don't know whether that's true, but it must be very unpleasant to have leather inside you. I'll be back directly."

She sailed gently out of the room, closing the door behind her.

"What a remarkably intelligent old lady!" exclaimed Hannibal.

"Why is it remarkable? Did you expect to find her stupid?"

"No, but her intelligence is quite above the average. She wasn't in the least surprised, for instance, to hear that we had been engaged for ten minutes."

"That's the worst of Mother," said Sheila. "She has a little trick of irritating people, and then they say things which are not true."

"But it is true. When you ask people to marry

you, and they don't refuse, it means that they are giving themselves time. Being engaged is merely giving oneself time. Ever since you went for the sandwiches, you have been wondering whether you would like to marry me or not. You went for the sandwiches ten minutes ago, so that we've been engaged for ten minutes."

"Which isn't long enough."

"Oh, don't be conventional."

"I don't know whether I'm being conventional or not, and I don't in the least care. I do lots of conventional things. I go to bed at night, for example, and I get up in the morning. I sit down at a table to have my dinner, and I do my hair in front of the glass. We all do hundreds of conventional things every day, and it's no use pretending we don't. To be unconventional for the sake of being unconventional is the shallowest form of conventionality."

"I'm so glad to hear you say that. I was afraid you might have developed into a clever girl. I hate cleverness. I know it is the fashion just now, but, in a few years' time, it will be quite out of date."

"But you said that you were clever, and that I was clever, and that was why you wanted us to be married."

"Yes, I know I did. But I didn't mean just 'cleverness' when I said the word 'clever.' I meant that I had genius and you had tact."

"How can I be sure that you have genius?"

"By helping me to bring it out."

"But I should like to be sure before we were married."

"That's just it—you can't be. You must take it on trust. I'm quite prepared to take you on trust."

"Thanks."

"And, after all, it's more of a gamble for me than it is for you."

"I don't see that."

"But it is! It matters very much to a man what sort of a wife he has, because a wife is a tremendously important factor in a man's life. It doesn't matter so much to a woman what sort of a husband she has, because women have so many other factors in their lives. A man just marries a wife, but a woman marries, not only a husband, but a house, and servants, and friends, and, possibly, children."

"I see all that. But you haven't yet told me whether you have a house and servants."

"I haven't either. It's no fun beginning by having things; the fun is to get them."

"I have got them."

"Where?"

"Here."

"Excuse me, you haven't anything of the sort. This is your father's house, and these are your mother's servants. Oh, don't let's be petty,

Sheila! Let's be fine, and daring, and take the world by the neck and squeeze it until it has to cry for mercy!"

He jumped up, and came towards her, his blue eyes shining, his boyish face very eager. Something in his tone, or in his words, or in the look of him, or in the air about them compelled her to rise and face him. The next moment, she was in his arms, and they were exchanging their first kiss. . . .

"Your father's in his bath," said a gentle voice at the door. "He's singing 'Through all the Changing Scenes of Life' quite nicely. Now, Mr. Quain, have you eaten all your sandwiches?"

"No."

"I see you haven't. Sit down and finish them at once. Sheila, my dear, get him a glass of beer, and then you had better go to bed. I haven't said anything to my husband, Mr. Quain, about what is to happen on Wednesday because I never let him be excited on Saturday nights. To-morrow evening, after he has got his night's sermon on 'Contentment' off his mind, will be quite time enough."

IV

HANNIBAL DEMANDS A HELPMATE

MR. GILLFOYLE quite fulfilled all Mrs. Gillfoyle's promises in his sermon on Contentment. He preached without manuscript, and almost without notes. His manner, on ascending the stairs of the pulpit, was a little diffident, because Mr. Gillfoyle was a very shy man. As he progressed, however, he warmed to his theme, and, by the time he had finished, had reached an almost bullying tone, as who should say, "You've got to be content. If you're not content now, you'd better see to it that you're thoroughly content before the week-end. If you don't, there may be a shortage next winter in blankets, coal, and soup."

The main point was, as Mrs. Gillfoyle often remarked with much satisfaction to her friends, that Mr. Gillfoyle, if he convinced nobody else, did, at any rate, convince himself. He was always at his best at the Sunday evening supper-table. The sermon had roused him, and he was ready to talk far into the night. On Monday, no doubt, he would feel a little jaded, and would remain rather jaded until Sunday came round again. Undoubt-

edly, it was his Sunday labors that kept Mr. Gillfoyle, on the whole, well and hearty.

"Thank you, sir, for an excellent sermon," said Hannibal.

In point of fact, Hannibal had heartily disagreed with every word. He had already grasped the truth that if people sat down with their hands folded in front of them, and took life as it came, without murmuring, the human race would steadily retrograde until, some day in the far distant future, Mr. Gillfoyle's descendants would be hanging from boughs by their tails and eating nuts. He was wise enough, however, to keep his opinions to himself. There was nothing to be gained by spoiling the old gentleman's cold beef and salad; on the contrary, he had every reason to pray that Mr. Gillfoyle's digestion was in perfect working order.

"You're fond of sermons, Mr. Quain?" replied Mr. Gillfoyle, carving-knife in air.

"Yes, sir, of good sermons — very."

"What church do you attend in London?"

"Westminster Abbey," said Hannibal, promptly.

"Ah! Mrs. Gillfoyle and I generally manage to attend a service at the Abbey when we make one of our little jaunts to town. Don't we, my dear?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Gillfoyle. "I like the Abbey, but I never can make out where the clergy

and the choir have got to. You don't see them; you only hear them, and that's rather unsatisfactory. And then the congregation seem afraid to join in the singing. If there's a hymn I know, or a chant I know, I always join in the singing myself, no matter where I am. I find that in London, people turn and stare if one does that. They couldn't be more surprised if one went to a theater and suddenly joined in the conversation on the stage. Sheila, my dear, give Mr. Quain another potato."

"Nothing like congregational singing!" agreed Mr. Gillfoyle. "Nothing like congregational singing!" he repeated, emphatically. "What do you say, Mr. Quain?"

"Quite right, sir. The singing in your church is really very good for a country place."

"I shouldn't call it good," observed Mrs. Gillfoyle, in her gentle manner, "but it's often very hearty — especially when Mr. Pardo, the butcher, is able to attend. Mr. Pardo has been in our choir for thirty-two years. He had a very powerful voice even as a boy, and the volume increased enormously as he grew older. I often find it quite unnecessary to go to church at all when Mr. Pardo is in his place. His voice, and the organ accompaniment, really sound very well from the garden."

"Does Mr. Pardo sing solos?"

“No, not actual solos, but the remainder of the choir trouble him very little.”

Supper over, Mrs. Gillfoyle and Sheila left the dining-room. They knew what Hannibal had to say, for he had been saying it to them at intervals all through the day. Mr. Gillfoyle, also, must have had an inkling, for he suddenly became very nervous, and lit a cigarette with such vigor that he had burnt nearly half of it before he got rid of the match. Observing these symptoms, Hannibal became more at his ease.

“Another glass of port, Mr. Quain?”

“No, thank you, sir.”

“Do you smoke?”

“Thank you, sir.”

“These are very good cigarettes. They were sent to me as a sample. I get a great many little luxuries in that way. Wonderful, the enterprise of the present day!”

“Yes, sir. I hope you don’t disapprove of enterprise?”

“Oh, no, provided that the object in view is a worthy one.”

“Quite so, sir. Would you call the intellectual improvement of the lower classes a worthy enterprise?”

“Certainly, certainly. Whilst I deplore the fact that too much attention is given to purely secular matters, I am bound to admit that the Board

Schools are having a marked effect on the youth of this country. Not always, perhaps, the effect that one would wish, but, on the whole, they might be worse. I am a broad-minded man, Mr. Quain, and I do not desire to prevent the people from thinking for themselves. What I could wish is that the present system of education should be leavened with a little more humanity, a little more sympathy, a finer appreciation of the duties of Man towards Man."

"Excellent, sir. I propose to introduce that human element."

"You, Mr. Quain?"

"Yes, sir. With your help."

"With *my* help?"

Mr. Gillfoyle was frankly flabbergasted. He put down his cigarette, grasped the arms of his chair very tightly — rather as though he expected it suddenly to rise in the air with him — and stared at this astonishing young man with eyes protruding from their sockets.

"It's in your power, Mr. Gillfoyle, to aid me very greatly, and, by aiding me, to benefit that enormous body of people of whom we have been speaking. Let me explain. I am about to start a paper."

"A religious paper?"

"Not precisely. You may be acquainted with a journal called 'Shavings'?"

"Oh, yes, I know it very well. A very bright

little paper. I often buy it when I have a long railway journey before me."

"Very well, sir. There is a page in that paper dealing with the queries of readers. They write to the Editor on all sorts of subjects, and he replies to the letters in the paper. I have always understood that that feature is conducted by the proprietor of the paper himself, Mr. Armstrong. I think you will agree that it is by far the most interesting page in the paper?"

"Yes, I think it is. I have often thought the same."

"I am very glad to hear that. Now, I have conceived the idea of starting a weekly paper which shall consist entirely of Answers to Correspondents."

"An excellent idea!" exclaimed Mr. Gillfoyle.

Hannibal rose, seized the old gentleman's hand, grasped it firmly, released it, and sat down again.

"By that remark, sir, you have encouraged me more than I can say. It is an excellent idea, and it's bound to succeed. The more I think of it, the more sure I am that it's bound to succeed. Look what we should save in the way of contributions! Why, the readers would write half the paper themselves! Look at the variety of topics we should touch upon! There, again, the readers come in; they supply the topics! And what interests one person to the extent of making him write

to us about it is bound to interest thousands of other people who have not the time or the energy to sit down and write to a stranger about it! ”

“ Capital! Capital! ” cried Mr. Gillfoyle.
“ Capital! Capital! ”

“ I was sure that you would see it, sir! ”

Hannibal, in his excitement, unconsciously raised his voice. “ And there is no paper like it in this country, or in America, or in the whole world! I tell you frankly, Mr. Gillfoyle, that I have hit upon an idea which is worth a hundred thousand pounds! ”

“ So much as that? ” asked Mr. Gillfoyle in an awed whisper.

“ Yes, more than that! It’s worth a million pounds! ”

“ Phew! . . . And do you think, Mr. Quain, that you will really get a very big sum for your idea? ”

The love of wealth, say what we may, is born in every human being. Mr. Gillfoyle, clergyman though he was, excellent man though he was, content though he was, pretended to be nothing more than human. The vision of the vast fortune conjured up by Hannibal had completely swept from his mind the starting point of this historic conversation, namely, the cultivation of the humanities in the masses.

“ I do, Mr. Gillfoyle — with your help. ”

“ I will certainly do whatever lies in my power,

but you must bear in mind that I am only a poor country parson. Such small private means as I possess are safely invested in sound securities, and I do not think that I should be justified —”

“ Oh, I’m not going to ask you to put any money into my paper, sir, but I *am* going to ask you for something more important than money. I want your daughter.”

“ *My — my daughter!* ”

“ Yes, sir. We have known each other for four years, more or less, and I know — I can’t tell you how I know it, but I do know it — that I can succeed with her at my side, and that I could not succeed nearly so well without her.”

“ You take my breath away! In what capacity —? ”

“ In the capacity of my wife.”

“ Your *wife*! You, a mere boy, have the audacity to ask me to give you my daughter because you can’t make a success of your paper without her help? ”

The Rector, flushing, rose to his feet. Hannibal remained very calm. He was a little pale, no doubt, more than a little excited, but that was only to be expected.

“ If you will allow me to say so, sir, there are two mistakes in your statement. In the first place, I am not asking you to give me your daughter. I am asking you to place no obstacle in the way of her giving herself to me. In the second place,

I did not say that I couldn't make a success of my paper without her help. I said that I knew I could succeed better with her help."

"Well, of all the cool young men that I have ever encountered, you are certainly the coolest, Mr. Quain! You do not even pretend that you love my daughter! You simply say, and even modify the statement, that you want her because she will be useful to you!"

"Might I venture to ask, Mr. Gillfoyle, why you wanted Mrs. Gillfoyle?"

"You have no right, as a matter of fact, to ask anything of the sort. But I'll tell you. I wanted Mrs. Gillfoyle because I loved her, sir! Because she loved me! Because it was the one object of my life to make her happy!"

The Rector was still on his feet. Hannibal, not to be at a disadvantage, also rose.

"One more question, sir," he said. "Did Mrs. Gillfoyle's father object to your marrying her?"

"That's a private matter, sir."

"In a way, yes, but there must be a good many people who could answer the question. Mrs. Gillfoyle herself, for instance."

"Mrs. Gillfoyle would not dream of satisfying your curiosity."

"I am sorry to undeceive you, but she has already told me that her father flatly refused to consent to her marriage with you, until you could

prove to him that you were capable of supporting her in comparative comfort."

"Oh, indeed! So Mrs. Gillfoyle told you, did she? Well, I am not ashamed of it. I quickly gave her father the assurance that he very properly required. Besides, the cases are utterly dissimilar."

"I fail to see it," said Hannibal. "I am quite prepared to give you just such an assurance."

"On all the points?"

"On all the points. Number one: I love your daughter. Number two: It's one of the objects of my life to make her happy. Number three —"

"Ah! 'One of the objects.' I said, 'the one object.' There's a very great difference."

"I'm not a quibbler, Mr. Gillfoyle. I candidly admit that I am also anxious to be happy myself. Am I to understand that you were quite indifferent to your own happiness?"

"Yes, sir. Quite!"

"Then I cannot rise to such heights, but I will go this far: If your daughter were not happy, I couldn't possibly be happy myself, so that, if only to insure my own happiness, I shall spare no effort to make her happy."

"Humph!"

"Let's pass on to number three: Your daughter loves me."

"Rubbish! Rubbish, sir! She's a mere child!"

“The same age of Mrs. Gillfoyle when she married.”

“You appear to have been inquiring pretty closely into my affairs?”

“Yes, sir, I took that liberty.”

“And how do you know that my daughter loves you? She’s never told me anything about it, and, so far as I know, she’s never told her mother anything about it. Why should she confide in you, a comparative stranger?”

“Because,” replied Hannibal, “she has a very sweet nature.”

“I know that, sir. I don’t need you to tell me anything about my daughter’s nature!”

“I beg your pardon. You asked me why she should tell me that she loved me, when she had not told you or Mrs. Gillfoyle anything about it. I was endeavoring to answer that question. She did not tell you because the information would have given you no pleasure. On the other hand, she told me because she knew it would give me very great pleasure. There remains only the fourth point—the question of means.”

“Yes, sir, that still remains. I shall want very precise information on that point.”

“Naturally. Would you mind telling me what your own income was when you married?”

“Yes, I should object very strongly.”

“Then I will tell you. You were a curate in

the small parish of Cloughborough, in Yorkshire. You had a salary of one hundred and twenty pounds per annum; in other words, rather more than two pounds per week. You married on that sum, and managed to get along on it fairly comfortably."

"Did Mrs. Gillfoyle tell you that also?"

"No, sir. Miss Sheila told me that."

"Women talk too much. Besides, I had prospects. What prospects have you?"

"I have already outlined my prospects to you. Roughly, I expect to become a peer of the realm and a millionaire."

Mr. Gillfoyle staggered backwards and groped for the bell-rope. The jangle was answered, rather suddenly, by the appearance of Mrs. Gillfoyle.

"Do you want anything, darling?"

"Yes, yes, my dear. You have left me alone with this young man rather too long. My head is beginning to go round. He has talked a great deal of nonsense about Sheila, and he winds up by telling me that he is going to be a millionaire and a peer of the realm. I fear he must be a little weak in the head."

"Let's all sit down," said Mrs. Gillfoyle, in her gentle way. "Are you weak in the head, Mr. Quain?"

"I don't think so, Mrs. Gillfoyle. Mr. Gillfoyle raised all the objections which you antici-

pated, and I have met them to the best of my ability."

"Tell me how you met them."

"Certainly. Mr. Gillfoyle wished to know whether I loved Sheila; I assured him that I did. I don't see that I can very well prove it better than by coming down here for the express purpose of asking her to marry me."

"Yes, you could," said Mr. Gillfoyle. "You could prove it better by being willing to wait seven years for her, as Jacob did for Rachel."

"That's a good point, Papa," Mrs. Gillfoyle agreed. "What have you to say to that, Mr. Quain?"

"I have this to say. In the days of Jacob, people lived to be about seven hundred years old. In these days, we live to be about seventy years old. Divide Jacob's seven years by ten, and you will see that the Jacob and Rachel affair was rather a hurried match."

Mrs. Gillfoyle nodded.

"I disapprove of liberty in connection with the Scriptures," retorted the Rector.

"I must really take leave to point out, sir, that I didn't introduce the Scriptures. You did it yourself, for the purposes of your own argument. If you really think, and if Mrs. Gillfoyle thinks, that Sheila and I will get to know each other better by being engaged for a year, instead of being married for a year, I'm quite willing to wait a

year, but you must bear in mind that I shall be working very hard all that time on my new paper, and we should be able to see each other very rarely. Moreover, the paper wouldn't have nearly so good a chance of success if I were working on it single-handed. That, however, is rather beside the point for the moment: the question is, do I, or do I not, love Miss Gillfoyle?"

"I think he does, Papa," said Mrs. Gillfoyle.

"And I think he's too young to know what he's talking about," objected the Rector.

"I should be sorry to think, Papa, that you didn't know what you were talking about when you proposed to me."

"You must never suggest anything of the sort, my dear. Young men were more thoughtful then than they are now."

"Mr. Quain has had a good deal of late to make him thoughtful. Come; I think we might admit that he is quite sincere in his desire to marry Sheila. After all, there are plenty of girls in London, you know; he must have met some of them."

"Oh, very well. Let us get on."

"One moment, sir. I take it that you will not again call this first point into question?"

"I might. I decline to bind myself."

"And I must decline to leave the point until it's settled."

"My husband has a constitutional dislike to

settling anything, Mr. Quain. Some people have, you know. You mustn't be impatient with them. We all have our little idiosyncrasies. You, for instance, like to settle everything out-of-hand; to Mr. Gillfoyle, that seems just as unreasonable as, I have no doubt, his method seems to you."

"But some things must be settled definitely," argued Hannibal. "For example, supposing that Mr. Gillfoyle were conducting the marriage ceremony between Sheila and myself: it would be rather awkward if he stopped short just as the ring was produced, and decided to leave the matter indefinite, wouldn't it?"

"That's mere nonsense! I haven't time for rubbish of that sort!"

"I didn't know that you were pressed for time, dear?"

"Well, I am. I want to go to bed."

This was another little trick of Mr. Gillfoyle's. When any important matter under discussion reached a very difficult point, he would suddenly go for a walk, or retire to his study and lock the door, or remember that one of his parishioners was anxiously expecting a visit at that precise moment. As a young woman, Mrs. Gillfoyle had tried very hard to cure him of this little trick, and had even wasted tears over it, but all to no avail. As the years went by, she gradually realized that her husband was like that, and that it was just as absurd to endeavor to break him of leaving things

unsettled as it would be to upbraid a man born with one leg shorter than the other for not walking like ordinary people.

She sympathized with Hannibal, who was new to Mr. Gillfoyle, and, with a vigor and impetuosity of youth, was prepared to flounder in the quicksand all night in the vain hope of finding a rock under his feet.

"Very well, darling," she said; "by all means go to bed, but I understand that Mr. Quain must return to London in the morning, and that he will leave here at six o'clock. How would it be to leave the matter in my hands? I'm just as anxious about Sheila's happiness as you are, and, now that we know exactly the points on which you wish to be satisfied, I really do think you might trust us to arrive at the best solution of the difficulty."

A large and almost visible cloud was immediately swept away from the Rector's brow. He still looked grave, but that was only because he felt the situation demanded gravity.

"Very well, my dear. If you are willing to take the responsibility, I will leave the matter in your hands. Should disaster come of this, pray remember that I gave you full warning."

With these solemn words, followed by a deep sigh, Mr. Gillfoyle shook hands with Hannibal, implanted a gentle kiss on his wife's forehead, cleared his throat, brushed some crumbs from his buttonless waistcoat, and quietly left the room.

"Now," said Hannibal, brisk and alert, "we can get to business."

Mrs. Gillfoyle did not resent this remark; she had heard it so often.

"I really don't know, of course, how far you got with him."

"Well, I told him that I loved Sheila, and that she loved me, and that it was one of the chief objects of my life to make her happy, and that I was at present making as much money, or rather more than he was himself making when he married, and that I expected eventually to become a millionaire."

"And a peer," Mrs. Gillfoyle reminded him, with her subtle smile. "Don't forget that."

"No, I hadn't forgotten it. Other men have been raised to the peerage, and I don't see why I shouldn't be. It's only a question of starting early enough, and working hard enough, and having enough brains."

"Still, that's looking rather far ahead. What we have to think of is the present. You say that you are making more money than my husband was making when we married, but surely, if you start your new paper, you will have to resign your present position?"

"Yes, that's true, but I needn't resign it unless I like. I'm going to resign it, not because I'm willing to do with less money, but because I insist on having more. Surely that's quite clear?"

“What you want is quite clear, but supposing you don’t get it? Where would you be then? And where would Sheila be then?”

“It really does annoy me, Mrs. Gillfoyle, that you should insist on regarding me as a helpless idiot. I’m not surprised that Mr. Gillfoyle thinks of me in that way, because he has no imagination. He can’t believe that a man has abilities out of the common until he has proved it. But you have imagination; you are an exceptionally intelligent person; you understand things without having them proved to you in black and white. And yet you calmly sit there and ask me, almost as helplessly as Mr. Gillfoyle might have put the question, what Sheila and I will do if my new paper fails! Why, what in the world do you imagine we shall do? Do you think that we shall take hands, like ‘The Babes in the Wood,’ and walk into Epping Forest and die? Or do you think —?”

“I’m sorry. I see that it was a silly question. Besides, Sheila could always come back to us if necessary.”

“Thanks for taking the gloomiest possible view!”

“Well, now we’ll take the cheerful view. You’re going to start a paper, and it’s going to be a huge success, and you’re going right to the top.”

“That’s more like it,” said Hannibal. “That’s the talk.”

“ And now tell me: will you be able to get plenty of money out of your new paper right from the start, Mr. Quain? ”

“ Yes, certainly, because I shall pay myself a salary as editor, and I shall pay Sheila a salary as my assistant.”

“ That sounds very nice. Where will this money come from? ”

“ It will come out of the money provided to start the paper.”

“ Oh, yes. And has that money been provided? ”

“ No, not yet, because one must do things in the right order.”

“ I see. First get your wife, and then get the money to start your paper. Most men would have gone the other way to work.”

“ Yes, I know that, but most men go the wrong way to work. That's why so few men succeed. If you'll just look at the thing from my point of view, Mrs. Gillfoyle, you will see how simple it is. In all the world, there is probably not more than one woman who would make a suitable wife for one particular man. It's of the first and greatest importance, therefore, that, having found, as he thinks, that one woman, the man should secure her. He can't afford delay. On the other hand, there is any amount of money in the world. It is not as though one had to secure one particular

lump of money; any old lump will do. Therefore, first get your wife and then get your money to start your paper. Now, isn't that awfully simple? "

"You're a genius," said Mrs. Gillfoyle. "Given luck, I really do believe that you'll become both a millionaire and a peer."

Hannibal sprang from his chair, dashed across to the old lady, flung his arms about her neck, and kissed her soundly upon the cheek.

"You're a darling!" he cried. "You shall never regret it! "

"Regret what? " asked Mrs. Gillfoyle, adjusting a hairpin.

"Regret giving me Sheila."

"But I haven't given her to you yet. I must have another talk with her after you have gone to-morrow."

"Oh, that's all right. I know what she'll do! She told me this afternoon."

"But she may have changed her mind by the morning. In the meantime, you have plenty to do; you'll have to get this money to start your paper. How much will you want? "

"That's easy enough; only two thousand pounds."

"That seems a great deal of money. Do you know to whom you'll go for it? "

"No, not yet, but there's more money than

that in London. I know I shall get it; I always get what I want. Talking of that, may I get the license? ”

“ Money first,” said Mrs. Gillfoyle, “ then the license, and then, *perhaps*, Sheila. Now go to bed, and don’t make too much noise going upstairs, and don’t lie awake, and don’t expect to see me in the morning because I shan’t be up. I have ordered you some grilled ham for your breakfast, and a couple of boiled eggs and coffee. You have a long ride before you. Good-night and — good luck.”

Hannibal opened the door for her. As she passed out, she laid one of her soft old hands on the lapel of his coat, drew down the young face to a level with her own, and gently returned the kiss that he had given her a little earlier. It was not such an impulsive kiss as his, nor such a warm kiss as the one that Sheila had given him in this same room the night before; but the memory of it lingered long in Hannibal’s heart.

V

THE REWARD OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN

THERE is in life an important element that goes by two very different names: successful men call it "Opportunity"; to unsuccessful men it is known as "Luck." It must be admitted by any fair-minded person that, up to the present, Hannibal had not been unduly favored by this element, except, perhaps, in the matter of his natural gifts.

He left Clinton Bagot Rectory a little later than the hour mentioned by Mrs. Gillfoyle — not a great deal later, but Sheila happened to be up and dressed by the surprising hour of six in the morning, and the sun was shining, the birds were singing, there was dew on the meadows, and there was a bend in the drive.

Prosaic people have been known to wonder why the majority of houses in the country are invisible from the drive-gate. Lovers never trouble their heads on the subject; they know well enough that all the world was made for lovers, and it is, therefore, only fit and proper that the drive-gate should be invisible from the house.

"When shall I hear from you?" asked Sheila, just the least bit mournfully.

"Every hour of the day. I shall send a telegram from every Post Office I pass."

"Don't be silly. You're not to waste your money."

"Well, then, when would you like to hear from me?"

"When you've something of tremendous importance to say."

"That's now. I love you."

"Do you?"

"Didn't you know?"

"I wasn't certain."

"Goodness gracious!" Hannibal made haste to lean his bicycle against the gate-post. "And I might have gone without telling you."

"Oh, you've *told* me."

"And you don't believe it? Then I must tell you, and tell you, and tell you until you do believe it!"

So he told her, and told her, and told her, until the church clock, looking down upon them from a very dignified height, counted seven in sonorous tones.

"Liar!" said Hannibal, looking up at him. "It was seventy."

"You'll be fearfully late at your office, and then you'll be dismissed, and I shall have ruined your career! A nice sort of helpmate!"

“That’s all right,” replied Hannibal, easily. “There’s never anything to do on Monday morning. Besides, I shall ride like the wind.”

“Because you’re so anxious to put all those long miles between us?”

“No, my beloved; because the way back to you lies through London. I shall keep thinking of that.”

“You really are rather a dear, you know,” said Sheila, looking at him with all her soul in her dark eyes.

“Dear — dear!” ticked the church clock solemnly to himself, and he struck the quarter-past rather sharply. Hannibal noted the slight asperity in the tone and knew that it was deserved.

Well, the only way to go was to go quickly. With extraordinary abruptness, therefore, he dashed at his bicycle, and was round the first bend in a cloud of dust before Sheila had fully realized that he was gone.

Everybody who has ridden long distances on horseback, or on a bicycle, or in the train, knows that the regularity of progress creates a certain rhythm, and that this rhythm often expresses itself in words. As Hannibal sped swiftly towards London through the clear morning air, the sentence that thumped in his brain in time to his pedaling was this: “How — shall — I — get — that — money? How — shall — I — get — that — money? How — shall — I — get — that

— money? How — shall — I — get — that —
money? How — shall — I — get — that —
money? ”

Through Stratford-on-Avon he whizzed, over the bridge, along the road to Shipston-on-Stour, through Shipston without a pause, and so up the long ascent that led to the summit of the Chiltern Hills. It was hard work, and he was beginning to get hot and thirsty. His head was bare, and the long, fair fringe that usually lay slant-wise across his forehead was now blown back in the breeze that indicated the pace at which he was traveling. He would dearly have liked, at any other time, to dismount and lie on his back in the long, cool grass by the roadside, staring up into the heights of Heaven, planning vast impossible schemes for the reorganization of the whole world on practical lines. For Hannibal was a practical idealist. But now he was racing to get back to Sheila, *via* London. There was no time for dreaming now.

He gained the summit of the Chiltern Hills at last, and was looking forward to a glorious run down on the other side, when, on turning a bend, he beheld some two hundred yards in front of him what was evidently the wreck of a light trotting-gig. The horse had been turned loose, and was grazing at a little distance from the gig, and the driver, a young man of about thirty years of age, was sitting on the bank, leaning against a wheel of

the wrecked gig, composedly smoking a cigar.

His head was bare, his clothes were smothered with dust, and one side of his face was badly scratched. He made not the slightest attempt to move as Hannibal drew up, but merely raised his hand as an indication that he wished the bicyclist to stop. Evidently, thought Hannibal, a person accustomed to being obeyed.

Hannibal, of course, at once jumped down from his machine, propped it up against the hedge, and hurried across to the stranger to see what he could do for him.

“Had a spill?” he asked.

“Looks that way.”

“Can I do anything for you?”

“Why, yes. I’d be mighty obliged if you’d just call at the next livery stables you happen to strike, and get them to come right along here as soon as convenient and just clear up this mess. I guess it don’t improve the look of the countryside on a nice bright morning.”

“Certainly I will,” said Hannibal. “But are you hurt?”

“Well, I don’t seem to have broken any bones this journey, as far as I can judge, but I came a good-sized bump when the buggy turned over, and I thought I’d just postpone investigations until I’d had a cheroot to steady me up. You don’t happen to have a drop of brandy about you, I suppose?”

“I’m sorry to say I haven’t, but I’ll tell them to bring you some. I fancy there are some livery stables not far from here, and I shan’t be long getting there downhill. Sure there’s nothing else I can do?”

“Sure there is,” replied the stranger. “You can do me the honor of exchanging cards.”

With some little difficulty he found his card-case, extracted a card, and handed it to Hannibal, who, in return, handed the stranger one of his.

“I’m mighty obliged to you, Mr. Quain,” said the stranger. “There don’t seem to be much traffic along this track, and I might have been here quite a while if you hadn’t happened along. I see you’re a Londoner. I am also residing, for the time being, in that charming city. If you should chance to be along my way, and would care to drop in, I’ll be able to thank you in a more gracious manner for your timely assistance.”

Still seated, he removed his cigar from his mouth, made a courteous little bow to Hannibal, replaced his cigar, and went on smoking.

“Thanks, awfully,” said Hannibal. “Now I’ll nip along.”

He tore down the hill and was soon at the livery stables, where he reported the accident and saw to it that assistance was sent without delay. Then he continued on his way to London, and, in due course, arrived at his office.

It was not until he was changing his clothes the

same evening that he thought of looking at the stranger's card. Then he read as follows:

MR. RANDOLPH J. HAMM.

Bath Club, 172, The Albany.

Badminton, Piccadilly.

Hurlingham, London, Eng.

This card interested Hannibal. There were several features about it that were new to him. To begin with, it gave an unusual amount of information. It was almost like a brief synopsis of Mr. Hamm's life, position, and achievements.

He was an American, of course; that was why he was careful to distinguish "London, England," from any other London that might be in the mind of the reader. His clubs showed, even apart from the situation in which Hannibal had found him, that Mr. Hamm was a true sportsman; the number and variety of them, together with the fact that he had chambers in The Albany, proved him to be a man of means.

At this juncture, one man will exclaim, "His Opportunity!" while another will say, "What luck!"

Opportunity or luck, Hannibal quickly made up

his mind to accept Mr. Hamm's pressing invitation to call upon him. After all, Mr. Hamm was more or less of a stranger, presumably, to British soil, and it would only be a matter of courtesy for Hannibal to inquire how he had reached home, and whether the results of the accident were at all serious.

Fortunately, he had lately invested in his first dress-suit. This he now put on, feeling uncommonly glad to have it, and went downstairs looking, as Hasdrubal expressed it, like a "Piccadilly Johnnie." Well, Hasdrubal was nearer the mark than he knew. Hannibal was going to see something of life in the West End.

The outer door of Mr. Hamm's chambers was opened by Mr. Hamm's footman, who passed Hannibal on to Mr. Hamm's gentleman-in-waiting, who placed Hannibal in a deep leather chair, mixed him a whisky-and-soda without a word, and put the cigars and the new copy of "Punch" at his elbow.

"Mr. Hamm instructed me to say, sir, that he would not detain you long. He is at present in the hands of his surgeon."

"Good gracious!" replied Hannibal. "I'd no idea he was as bad as that! I wouldn't have called if I'd known!"

"Purely a precautionary measure, sir. Mr. Hamm wished to make quite sure that there were no bones broken this time."

“Is he in the habit, then, of breaking his bones?”

“Yes, sir. Since he took up his residence in this country, some eighteen months ago, Mr. Hamm has broken almost every bone in his body. Indeed, sir, I understand that he came to England for that express purpose.”

Hannibal shot a quick look at the man to see if he was guilty of the impertinence of trying to chaff him, but the servant's face was perfectly grave.

“Have you everything you require, sir, for the moment?”

“Everything, thank you. Please beg Mr. Hamm not to hurry the examination on my account.”

“Very good, sir.”

The man withdrew noiselessly, and noiselessly closed the door. Hannibal was now free to examine the apartment at his ease. The first objects to catch his eye were a large and miscellaneous collection of sporting implements — bats, tennis-rackets, whips, golf-clubs, an oar, a pair of sculls, several pairs of stirrups, a jockey's cap, boxing gloves, croquet mallets, right down to a ping-pong ball. The pictures, also, reflected the sporting taste of Mr. Hamm. There were pictures of horses in mid-air; men in mid-air; dogs in mid-air. There were pictures of men shooting birds, and men shooting lions, and men shooting ele-

phants, and men shooting tigers. There were pictures of people in all kinds of boats — sailing boats, whaling boats, rowing boats, herring boats, punts, racing boats, dinghies, and Canadian canoes. There were pictures of people going up in balloons and coming down in parachutes. In short, there was no phase of the world of sport that was not pictured on the crowded walls of this extraordinary room.

At the far end of the room, there was a huge bookcase. Hannibal, being interested in books, stole across the room and examined the titles. "How to Shoot"; "How to Fish"; "How to Swim"; "How to Ride"; "How to Play Golf"; "How to Play Polo"; "How to Row"; "How to Play Cricket"; "How to Play Football." There were biographies of famous sportsmen; there was a whole row of bound volumes of the "Badminton Magazine." Of other kinds of literature, there was not one single example. Hannibal came to the conclusion that Mr. Hamm was either the most versatile sportsman in the world or a monomaniac.

For the rest, the room was most luxuriously furnished. Hannibal had never dreamed of such luxury in his life. He had never walked on carpet so soft, or seen chairs so deep, or ornaments so costly, or curtains so rich. Providence had undoubtedly delivered Mr. Randolph J. Hamm into

his hands, and he would not fly in the face of Providence on any account.

Hearing voices in the hall, he slipped back to his chair, took up a copy of "Punch," and was apparently absorbed in a picture of the usual little girl saying something mechanically precocious to the conventionally astonished mother when Mr. Hamm entered.

"Well, say, if this isn't mighty kind of you, Mr. Quain! I hoped you'd be around one of these days to give me the opportunity of thanking you for your great kindness, but I hardly expected to see you within a couple of hours of my return. Sit right down and rest yourself, Mr. Quain. You must be mighty fatigued after riding all that distance on your bicycle. I never saw a man go off so quick outside a race-track since I settled in this country. We're used to things being done quick on the other side, Mr. Quain, but you English folk, if I may take the liberty of saying so, are apt to take life a trifle more slowly. But as for you, Mr. Quain, why everything you do is so quick you might almost be an American. You were away down the road like greased lightning; you sent that relief party along before I'd had time to smoke half my cigar; and now I find you sitting here, in your evening clothes, just as though you hadn't been near a bicycle for a month."

"I hope the result of the surgeon's examination was satisfactory?"

“ Well, the answer to that question is according to how one regards the matter. You see, Mr. Quain, I am an American who has made it the ambition of his life to become an English gentleman. When my father died, about two years ago, I asked myself what I would like to be better than anything else in the whole wide world, and I came to the conclusion that I would like to be a real English gentleman better than the greatest American financier that ever reigned in Wall Street. So I just realized my private fortune, which was pretty considerable, and I came to this country to study the ways of the English gentry.

“ I very soon made up my mind, Mr. Quain, that the one outstanding characteristic of the real English gentleman was his love for sport, and I threw myself with some determination into as many branches of sport as one man could be expected to tackle at a time. As you will see by these walls, Mr. Quain, I have done pretty nigh everything — up to the present, however, without any very notable success. I have been thrown in the hunting field twenty-seven times; I dislocated my left shoulder playing polo at Hurlingham; I strained my heart rowing in a race from Mortlake to Putney; I have played cricket at Lords — but I judge from the fact that there were no spectators present that the season was on the decline on the occasion of that match; I have had lessons in boxing, in fencing, and in trout fishing.

“ When you found me this morning, to cut a long story short, I was engaged in a long-distance trotting match from Oxford to Stratford-on-Avon, my opponent being a young gentleman of noble descent at present in residence at Christ Church College. He was leading, I expect, by some miles; at any rate, I'd not set eyes on him since the start. In looking over my shoulder to admire the beauties of the English landscape, I apparently pulled a wrong string, with the unfortunate result witnessed by yourself. The surgeon tells me that I have broken no bones; so far, that is so much to the good. At the same time, he has strongly advised me to abandon all the more dangerous kinds of sport, and this, as you will easily understand, Mr. Quain, has caused me very great disappointment. I did feel that I was some way along the road to becoming an English gentleman, but now, if I took the surgeon's advice, I might just as well return to my own country. It's rough luck, Mr. Quain, but I hope to bear it like a philosopher. Won't you light your cigar? ”

“ Thank you,” said Hannibal, “ but I should really prefer a cigarette.”

“ Why, with all the pleasure in life, Mr. Quain.”

Mr. Hamm rose, and Hannibal thought that he was about to hand him a cigarette, but the American merely pressed a button, in answer to which the grave man-servant again appeared.

"James," said Mr. Hamm, "Mr. Quain will take a cigarette."

James crossed to the side-table, took up a silver cigarette box, opened it, carried it across to Hannibal, replaced the box on the table, struck a match, held the flame to the end of the cigarette, blew out the match, placed the charred remains carefully in an ash-tray, walked to the door, opened it, let himself out, and closed the door.

"I've been thinking I'll have to get rid of that man," said Mr. Hamm.

"Really? What's the matter with him?"

"I'm not quite sure, but there must be something wanting in him. I don't feel any more afraid of James, Mr. Quain, than I do of you. When I first had him, I was a good deal more nervous with him than I am now; he made me feel kind of small when he came into the room. But that's all past, and I don't like it. He'll have to go. It's a pity, because he's got accustomed to my ways, but no English gentleman would retain him in his service."

"I'm afraid you'll think me very stupid, but I don't quite follow. Why should you wish him to make you feel small when he comes into the room?"

"Well, Mr. Quain, I have made a very careful study, during my residence in this country, of English social life, and one of the first things I was privileged to learn was that every English

gentleman is afraid of his servants. In America, it's different. We ain't afraid of our servants, nor they ain't afraid of us: we all treat each other just the same way. Now, I didn't come to this country to live on the American plan; I came here to live on the English plan, and I expect, when I pay my man-servant a good salary, that I shall be scared to death of him just the same as any English gentleman would be. You get me now, Mr. Quain, I trust? "

"Yes," said Hannibal, repressing a desire to laugh, since Mr. Hamm was evidently in dead earnest. "I understand you, but I must admit that I'd never noticed that English people were afraid of their servants, and took pride in being so. You evidently have great powers of observation, Mr. Hamm. You ought to write a book about our country."

"That's a curious thing, Mr. Quain, you mentioning that. I've been thinking some time back that I ought to write a book, because I have noticed that many English gentlemen do so. But they do not write more than one book, and it's therefore the aristocratic thing to write one book, and the vulgar thing to write more than one. I sized it up that I had better postpone the writing of my book until I had been located on English soil a while longer. Would you mind telling me frankly, Mr. Quain, whether you notice any marked difference between my handling of the

English language, and the way in which your swell friends in this country handle it? ”

“ Only a very slight difference,” said Hannibal.

“ That’s very gratifying to me — very gratifying indeed. We think a mighty lot of the pure English accent and the pure English speech on our side of the water, Mr. Quain, as you will readily imagine.”

“ But the American slang is delightful! ”

“ Well, I don’t say but what we have some knack for figurative illustration.”

“ You have, indeed! I should very much like to get you to write an article for my paper, Mr. Hamm.”

“ What paper is that, Mr. Quain? ”

“ A little paper, a little weekly paper, called ‘ You and I.’ Do you like the title? ”

“ Why, certainly I do. It’s a very charming title — nice and intimate. But I don’t seem to have run across that particular journal as yet.”

“ No, you wouldn’t have seen it yet, because it isn’t out. I’m hoping to bring it out very shortly.”

“ And you’ll be your own editor, Mr. Quain? ”

“ Oh, yes. I shall be my own editor, and part-proprietor.”

“ You have a partner? ”

“ Not yet. I want to choose a man with a really sporting instinct.”

"This is a sporting paper, then, I understand?"

"No, not exactly a sporting paper, although I shall deal with sport as with all other matters. When I said that I wish to choose a man with a really sporting instinct, I meant a man who was not afraid of a little gamble. Running papers, Mr. Hamm, is one of the most fascinating gambles in the world. It beats horse-racing all to nothing. Have you ever run a paper, Mr. Hamm?"

"I can't say I have. I once had a share in a theatrical syndicate, but the play, unfortunately, was not quite adapted to the tastes of the public. It was withdrawn, in point of fact, after the third night."

"I hope you didn't lose very much?"

"The preliminary expenses were rather more than I had anticipated. They cost me three thousand pounds."

"Phew! A thousand pounds a night! That was pretty stiff! Why, for a great deal less than that, I could run my paper for three months."

"You interest me very greatly, Mr. Quain. Would you have any objection to just outlining to me a general idea of your paper? I might possibly be the man for whom you're waiting. I may say right here, Mr. Quain, that I conceived a strong liking for you this morning, and that feel-

ing has been deepened by your attention and courtesy in calling to inquire after me this evening. You may rest assured that I shall respect your confidence in the most complete manner."

Quelling his excitement, Hannibal launched into a glowing description of his paper. He did not dwell too heavily on the general cost of the running of such a paper, because he judged, and judged rightly, that the American temperament is less interested in scraping and saving than in magnitude.

He drew a delightful picture of the homes of England — of the father returning to the bosom of his family with the latest copy of "You and I" in his pocket, and the group of happy children running to meet him, and the general settling down by the fireside to hear father reading gems of information and advice from the friendly columns. He dwelt very tenderly upon the wonderful help that such a journal must prove to the poorest in the land, yet he did not allow Mr. Hamm to overlook the fact that the enormous circulation to which "You and I" must necessarily attain would cause it to be respected in the circles of the greatest in the land.

He concluded by pointing out that, although he was not in a position to provide any of the necessary capital himself, yet he would provide things that were harder to come by, and of more

importance to the success of the enterprise than mere capital, namely, experience, energy, originality, sympathy, understanding, self-sacrifice, and unbounded ambition.

When Hannibal had at last finished speaking, there was silence for a few moments in the luxurious apartment. Those moments seemed to Hannibal as long as centuries. At last Mr. Hamm rose very solemnly to his feet, and spoke as follows:

“ Mr. Quain, I have listened with very great attention to the details of your new journal which you have been so good and so confiding as to place before me. As I have told you, this is a line of country, to use one of your sporting idioms, which is new to me. At the same time, we Americans consider ourselves to be pretty shrewd judges of any scheme which is likely to command a commercial success, and it may gratify you to know that, in my opinion, I believe you have more than a sporting chance of striking oil with your journal. Now, Mr. Quain, I will be quite frank with you.

“ As men go in this country, I am a wealthy man, but I am not so wealthy as I was when I arrived. It is commonly supposed in the United States of America that the cost of everything in London is precisely half the cost of everything in New York; I could undeceive my fellow-countrymen on that point. However, I have still, as

I say, a pretty considerable fortune behind me, the greater part of which I hope to retain, if your countrymen will allow me to do so, to provide against future contingencies.

“Now, Mr. Quain, you said a while back that for three thousand pounds you could run your paper for three months. Was that said deliberately or in haste, Mr. Quain?”

“Oh, deliberately — quite deliberately!”

“Very well, Mr. Quain, I will take you at your word. I will see my lawyer to-morrow morning, when I trust you will also make it convenient to be present, and the deeds of partnership in your new journal shall be drawn up. I will place the sum of three thousand sovereigns at your disposal, and you, on your side, will devote the whole of your time and your energy to making a success of this venture. At the conclusion of the three months, if your paper has found its way into the homes of England — for a very delightful picture of which I have to thank you — all well and good; I take it that it will then be self-supporting. If, on the other hand, the people of England haven't by that time opened their arms to your journal, I must beg leave to feel myself free to withdraw from the partnership without further loss. I hope you don't consider these terms unfair, Mr. Quain?”

“Unfair!” cried Hannibal, springing excitedly to his feet. “Nothing could be fairer!”

Nothing could be more sportsmanlike! You don't do yourself justice, Mr. Hamm, when you say that you haven't succeeded in your attempts to become an English sportsman: why, you're the finest sportsman I've ever met!"

That tribute, albeit boyish and spontaneous, was alone worth three thousand pounds to Randolph J. Hamm. His thin, clean-shaven face lit up with a genuine look of unqualified pleasure, and he strode across the room to Hannibal with hand outstretched.

"Put it there, Mr. Quain! This is a great night! Proud to have met you, sir! I'd like to have you come right along to my club and celebrate the occasion in a fitting manner! It's a little late for dinner — we've been talking a long time; but I guess there's worse things than a grilled chicken and a bottle of champagne! Will you come?"

"Thanks, very much," said Hannibal, feeling, all of a sudden, quite in his natural element.

He was still in his natural element when he signed to a magnificent waiter and ordered an unlimited number of telegraph-forms. With splendid recklessness, he wrote three telegrams — one to Mr. Gillfoyle, one to Mrs. Gillfoyle, and one to Sheila. They were delivered at Clinton Bagot Rectory just after eight o'clock the next morning.

“ Well! ” exclaimed Mr. Gillfoyle. “ Who would have thought it! ”

“ I should,” said Mrs. Gillfoyle, quietly.

Sheila said nothing. She simply slipped away to her room.

VI

HANNIBAL'S BUSY DAY

HANNIBAL will always remember the day that followed this momentous interview with Mr. Randolph J. Hamm as one of the busiest of his life. Following his usual custom, he said nothing to his people at home until the matter was signed and sealed.

The interview with Mr. Hamm's lawyer passed off fairly smoothly. The lawyer, it is true, looked at Hannibal as though he suspected him of being the chief of a notorious gang of thieves, who had set themselves the task of separating Mr. Hamm from the paternal dollars; Hannibal rather resented this look, and showed signs of haughtiness, but the American had a short quick way in business that proved effective even with an English lawyer. (Since that date, Hannibal has had many opportunities of studying the legal mind at close quarters, and he has come to understand that an agreement without difficulties would be as tame to a lawyer as a golf course without bunkers to a first-class player.)

The agreement was eventually drawn up on the

exact lines sketched out by Mr. Hamm the previous evening. Should the paper prove a success before the capital provided by Mr. Hamm was exhausted, Mr. Hamm would be entitled to half the profits so long as there were any profits to halve. On the other hand, should the paper not have turned the corner by the time the capital was exhausted, Mr. Hamm should be at liberty either to withdraw from the scheme altogether without further loss, or to retain his interest by providing further capital. The lawyer pointed out that this was a very advantageous agreement for Mr. Quain. Mr. Quain promptly retorted that, whilst Mr. Hamm was speculating merely with his money, he, Mr. Quain, was speculating with his youth, his energy, and his brains; and, moreover, was actually selling to Mr. Hamm one-half of an idea which might prove as valuable as an exhaustless gold-mine.

"Might," said the lawyer, with a sniff.

"Will," replied Hannibal.

"Young men are sanguine," said the lawyer.

"I object to that remark."

"On what grounds?" asked the lawyer.

"I object to being put into a class."

"You consider yourself an exception to the ordinary run of humanity, Mr. Quain?"

"Yes," said Hannibal.

The lawyer smiled, and glanced at Mr. Hamm. The smile found no sympathetic response on the

lean countenance of the American, who did not at all like the turn that the interview was taking.

“ See here, Mr. Salkeld; I don't somehow catch the purpose of this very interesting dialogue. If you and Mr. Quain are anxious to enjoy a battle of wits, why, by all means, let her rip, but, so far as I'm concerned, I feel a little bit out of the running. I have decided to enter Mr. Quain as my candidate for this contest, and he has named his fee which amounts to the sum of three thousand pounds. If Mr. Quain should pull off the prize, which I think he will, I stand to pocket the half of it, which might prove to be no inconsiderable sum. In the meantime, Mr. Quain has to go through the arduous preparation of training, and he has to stand up to his opponent and take the knocks. I take no knocks; I merely have a sporting bet, and, if I lose the cash, it will only be a similar experience to others that have come my way in this very delightful but not altogether inexpensive country. From which you will understand, Mr. Salkeld, that I have quite made up my mind to the prospect of losing this money, so that the quicker you can get your end of the stick fixed up all good and proper, the better I shall be pleased.”

The hypercritical may urge that Mr. Hamm's metaphors were a little mixed. Mixing metaphors is rather like mixing a cocktail; some people make a nauseous mess of it, while others

produce a delightfully exhilarating drink. Mr. Hamm's metaphorical cocktail probably disagreed with the lawyer, but Hannibal found it wholly agreeable.

The document having been signed in duplicate, witnessed, and stamped, Hannibal's thoughts next turned to Sheila. Just as a newly-appointed Prime Minister at once proceeds to form his Cabinet, or a General on the eve of battle summons his staff to headquarters, so Hannibal was still firmly convinced that he must provide himself with the best possible assistant before he took any really definite steps in the bringing out of his paper.

The idea of marriage by banns appalled him; life was far too short to waste three weeks of it waiting for something to happen which could be made to happen in three days. He had ascertained that people could get married in three days provided that one of the parties to the marriage "hath had his or her usual place of abode for the space of fifteen days immediately preceding the issue of the license within the boundary of the Parish Church, or the District Parish in the Church of which the marriage is to be solemnized."

Sheila, of course, had resided a good many more than fifteen days in the Parish of Clinton Bagot. The next step was to obtain the license. Sheila's father was himself a surrogate, but Hannibal had had some insight into the methods of the Rector.

He saw him vacillating, shilly-shallying, doubting, and, finally, postponing. It would be far better, he decided, to get the license himself, appoint a day for the wedding by telegram, slip down to Clinton Bagot, rush the old gentleman into the ceremony, and return to London with his bride.

Return? Yes, but return where? He had not had time to think of that. It was obvious that they must have a place to live in, and it must be a nice place, and a suitable place, and a place which Sheila could look upon, for the time being, at any rate, as home. Really, when one came to tackle the matter, there were a great many ridiculous difficulties in the way of a man who wanted to get married. Everybody was always upbraiding single men for their selfishness, but the State, and Society, and Convention all placed as many difficulties in his way, when he did make up his mind to take the plunge, as though he was about to do something reserved for the very few.

On consulting his "Whitaker," he discovered that marriage licenses could be obtained in London by application at the Vicar-General's Office, 3, Creed Lane, Ludgate Hill, E. C., between the hours of ten and four, and that the application for the license must be made in person by one of the parties about to be married. He discovered, further, that the fees for the license amounted to thirty shillings, and that there was an additional charge of ten shillings for the stamp. During

his luncheon hour, therefore, behold Mr. Hannibal Quain, with set face but a heart beating a little more quickly than usual — what is it about this business of marriage that even in the most insignificant preliminary stages always makes hearts beat more quickly than usual? — stalking up Ludgate Hill and turning off to the right down the quaint little byway known this many a year past as Creed Lane (within the old area of Doctors' Commons).

The door of Number Three — a number that must have bitten itself into the memories of many thousand prospective bridegrooms — opened into a small passage, which led Hannibal direct into a dark lofty room. A small counter faced him. Apart from this counter, the principal furniture of the room was a high desk, and in front of it a high stool. Upon this stool, an elderly gentleman was perched.

If Hannibal had expected the elderly gentleman to leap from the stool and rush to meet him with both hands outstretched, or if he had expected him to indulge in a knowing chuckle, or if he had expected him to give a little cough of slight satisfaction, or if he had expected him even to raise one eye-brow ever so slightly, he was quite mistaken. The elderly gentleman, in point of fact, took no notice of Hannibal whatever until our impetuous young friend rapped sharply upon the counter with his knuckles; then at last he turned

his official head in a very human and unofficial way toward his new customer, and said, in the mildest and most unofficial voice imaginable, "Good-day."

"Good morning," said Hannibal.

The elderly gentleman, having thus established human relations with the very young gentleman at the counter, turned to his ledger again and went on writing. This mode of conduct seemed to Hannibal not a little unreasonable. Here was an office instituted and kept going for the sole purpose of enabling people to get married in a hurry; the authorities responsible for the establishment and conduct of the office fully realized that certain people were foolish enough to wish to get married in a hurry, and charged them, therefore, two pounds for the privilege.

Very well; Hannibal was quite prepared to pay the two pounds; indeed, he had the two pounds in his trouser-pocket, and had turned them over and over at least five hundred times on his way up Ludgate Hill and down Creed Lane; but this mild-mannered, elderly gentleman, instead of springing from his stool and dashing at Hannibal in order to help him, so far as lay in his power, to get married in a hurry, merely gave him "Good-day," and went on scribbling in the ledger like any ordinary clerk.

"I say!" said Hannibal, after a fairly lengthy pause.

Again the elderly gentleman stopped writing

and turned his gentle face toward the customer.

"Yes."

"Can you spare me a moment?"

"Certainly." But still he made no effort to approach the counter.

"Thanks. I want to get married."

"Yes?"

"Yes."

"Very good."

The elderly gentleman, still quite unperturbed, slid himself very slowly and cautiously from the summit of the high stool to the floor, and then, still very slowly and cautiously, opened a drawer and drew from it a printed form.

"What is your name?" he asked softly.

"Hannibal Quain."

"Quain is your surname?"

"Yes."

"And Hannibal is your Christian name?"

"Yes."

"You have no other Christian name?"

"No."

"What is your age?"

"Nineteen."

The elderly gentleman stopped writing, laid down his pen, turned his head, and looked in his gazelle-like way at Hannibal. "That is very young, Mr. Quain. I presume you have the consent of your parents?"

"I am my own master," replied Hannibal.

"You are prepared to swear to that?"

"Yes, I am."

"Very good. Kindly give me your full address."

Hannibal gave it.

"And the name of the bride?"

"Miss Sheila Gillfoyle."

"Gillfoyle is the surname?"

"Yes."

"And Sheila is the Christian name?"

"Yes."

"Any other Christian name?"

"No."

"And the age of the bride?"

"Seventeen."

Once more came the laying down of the pen, the turn of the head, the gazelle-like gaze of the gentle eyes. And once more the soft comment, "That is very young, Mr. Quain."

"Her mother was married at the same age."

"The lady is also an orphan?"

"No. Both her parents are alive."

"Ah. And the lady has the consent of her parents to this marriage?"

"Yes. Her father will himself perform the ceremony. He is the Rector of Clinton Bagot, in Warwickshire. And the ceremony is to be solemnized in the Parish of Clinton Bagot."

"I must ask you whether the other party has resided for the space of fifteen days at Clinton

Bagot, or will have resided for that space of time at Clinton Bagot for the fifteen days immediately preceding the ceremony? ”

“ Yes, she will.”

“ Will you kindly come here and place your finger on this seal, Mr. Quain? ”

Hannibal obeyed.

“ Now, will you kindly say after me, ‘ I do solemnly declare that I know not of any lawful impediment why I, Hannibal Quain, may not be joined in matrimony to Sheila Gillfoyle.’ ”

Hannibal, feeling rather as though he were being married to a phantom, repeated the words as he was told. The elderly gentleman then took from his desk a ten shilling stamp, which he placed upon the license.

“ I must ask you for the sum of two pounds, if you please, Mr. Quain — thirty shillings for the fees and ten shillings for the stamp.”

Hannibal produced his two hot sovereigns with the air of one who had another fifty or so in his pocket. The elderly gentleman slipped the license into an envelope and handed it to his customer; they bowed to each other politely, and Hannibal found his way out of the dark room into the little passage, and so once more into the broad light of Creed Lane.

So far, so good. But another thought had occurred to him while he was conducting this important business — he must provide himself with

a wedding-ring for Sheila, and, more than that, the ring must fit. He had sometimes wondered, idly enough, how bridegrooms managed to obtain wedding-rings that appeared to fit the finger of the bride so neatly; he now wished that he had made closer inquiries. Anyhow, there was one way out of the difficulty; he could wire to Sheila to forward him a ring that fitted the third finger of the left hand.

While he was waiting for the ring to arrive, he would look about for a suitable home. He was also in urgent need, of course, of offices for the paper, and it suddenly occurred to him that these two rents might be very well combined. If he could find chambers in the neighborhood of Fleet Street, and they were neither too small nor too confined, there was really no reason why he and Sheila should not start life by actually living at the office, just as a trademan in a small way of business finds it convenient to live over the shop.

The more he thought of it, the more the idea appealed to him. While Sheila was cooking the potatoes, she could be reading the manuscript of a short story, and while he was hunting up the answer to some difficult question on horticulture, for instance, he could also be having his dinner. He would get his budget of letters directly he awoke in the morning, and he would still be at the office when the last post was delivered at night.

Hannibal began to wonder why nobody had ever thought of this very simple, very economical, and very business-like mode of running a weekly paper before, but he soon dismissed the thought. It was of no use inquiring into the minds and brains of others; he had long since made up his mind on that point. Men who stopped to ask advice of others, he had often noticed, generally ended by doing nothing at all. He decided, forthwith, to look for his office-home.

It is not mere sentiment that leads newspaper-folk to take up their quarters, if not in Fleet Street itself, then as near as possible to Fleet Street. To begin with, an address in that neighborhood inspires the confidence of the "Trade." The "Trade" is apt to regard the person who establishes himself in, say, Bloomsbury, as an amateur; the "Trade" likes to have its business concentrated. Hannibal knew, even at this tender age, that the success of his venture would be very dependent upon the good-will of the "Trade." He would have to rely upon the "Trade" for his paper, for his ink, for his printing, for his advertisements, for his distribution, and for his sales. If the "Trade" liked him, and liked his paper, the public could, to a certain extent, be persuaded to like the paper also; on the other hand, if the "Trade" shook its head over the first number of "You and I," the unfortunate infant would lead but a gasping and choking life of it, and

might expire before it had had time to outgrow the prejudice of that tentacular wet-nurse.

Many people, especially our American friends, imagine that the London of Dickens no longer exists — that all the picturesque old houses have been swept away, and that with them has gone the happy-go-lucky, free-and-easy, hand-to-mouth, jolly, irresponsible life of Bohemian London. But those who know their London better could take a visitor from the other side of the water by the hand, and lead him gently to a neighborhood on the south side of the Strand known as the Adelphi.

If you go down John Street, Adelphi, and take the second turning on the left, cross the road, and stop at a certain house on the right, you will find yourself face to face with the house to which the great Lord London brought his bride, in which the first number of "You and I" was born, and in which the foundation of that enormous and world-famous fortune was laid.

The staircase is very narrow and rather steep. You must pass the first floor, and the second floor. There are, in all, scarcely more than a dozen steps between the second floor and the third, which will give you a rough idea of the height of the rooms in this old-world London house. The third floor, which, in structure, is precisely the same to-day as it was then, consists of a sitting-room with a long casement-window running the whole length

of one side of the room, and opening on to the parapet.

It might have been the very room from which the unfortunate Bill Sykes attempted to lower himself into the river when his pursuers were at his heels, save that the river has now been driven farther away by the building of the Embankment. The ceiling of this room has to accommodate itself to the peculiarities of the roof, and the roof has so many peculiarities that the ceiling is almost wholly composed of little nooks and angles and cunning corners.

From this room you pass through a low doorway into the bedroom, the conformation of which is much the same as that of the sitting-room, with the exception of the outlook, which commands a splendid and inspiring view of innumerable house-tops. Lord London, in those boyish days, often gazed at the hundreds and hundreds of little windows and crooked chimney-stacks; every window meant at least one human being, and every chimney-stack meant a whole group of human beings. What were they all thinking about? What were their interests? What did they want to know? How could he please them? These were the questions that he put to himself whenever he looked out of that little window, and the result is known to all the world.

Besides the sitting-room and bedroom there was also a little room which had been used by

some previous occupant or series of occupants as a kitchen, and there was an alcove in the bedroom which, with the aid of a curtain, could easily be converted into a bath-room.

Hannibal would have liked to be even nearer to Fleet Street, but small sets of chambers in that region are quickly snapped up by young barristers, bachelor-journalists, and the other members of the great tribe who are all wresting a living out of the very heart of London, and sustaining themselves on the nourishment that is healthier than drink, cheaper than food, and always in season. The name of it is Hope.

If Sheila did not like the rooms, they could, of course, be changed, but he pictured her planning the arrangement of this corner and that corner, trying a chair here and a table there, putting up her curtains, arranging books on the shelves, and adorning the walls with such works of art as they would be able to afford. It may be said at once, even though we are anticipating matters a little, that Sheila quite fell in love with the snug little home that Hannibal had found for her. It was the first home of her own that she had ever possessed, and she found it full of beauty and delight.

What did it matter to her that there were three flights of steps to be climbed, and that the stairway was steep and narrow? What did it matter to her that there was room in the kitchen for only

one person at a time, and that that person must be careful not to turn too suddenly for fear of a collision with the little improvised dresser? What did it matter to her that one had to have great care of one's head when one was taking a bath in the alcove behind the curtain? Such points as these are looked upon as serious discomforts after the thirties have been reached: in the twenties, they are nothing more than a part of the Great Game, and at seventeen it is a delightful joke to upset a saucepan with your elbow, or to fall backwards into the bath just when you have completely dried yourself.

Hannibal had no sooner discovered and inspected the rooms than he hastened to the office of the agent and signed an agreement for twelve months. This was on the same day as the interview at the lawyer's office and the procuring of the marriage license. But his work for that day was not yet finished: he had still to tell his mother of the changes in his life that he was about to make.

It was Mrs. Quain's habit to spend an hour in Regent's Park in the cool of the evening. One of the boys generally accompanied her, and on this evening her companion was Hannibal. Mrs. Quain was a little surprised when he offered to escort her to the Park, not that he was unfilial, but because his feverishly active temperament rarely allowed him to sit still for ten minutes with-

out some definite occupation. She soon discovered from his manner, however, that he would not be without occupation on this occasion. Neither of them made any remark apart from commonplaces until they had found a quiet seat, and even then it was some few minutes before Hannibal definitely plunged into the subject.

"Mother," he said at last, "do you ever think of the future?"

"I am always thinking of it," replied Mrs. Quain.

"Well, what about it, Mother?"

"That is rather a big question, my boy."

"I know it's a big question, Mother, but that's all the more reason why it must be tackled. Would you mind telling me your plans?"

"Well, I've been writing letters to some of my friends and relations."

"What about?"

"About you boys."

"What about us boys?"

"Well, naturally, I must try to arrange for you all. You have managed to make a start for yourself, and so you are off my mind. I want your Uncle Arthur to take Hasdrubal into his office, and, a little later, I think your Uncle Jack might do something for Socrates. The others are still too young at present for anything but school. How their school bills are to be paid, I don't

quite see at present, but I have enough money in hand to get along for the time being, and I dare-say something will happen to make matters easier. Those are all the plans that I have been able to arrange."

"Something *has* happened," said Hannibal, quietly.

Mrs. Quain turned quickly and looked at him. He had taken off his hat, and he looked very young and fresh with his fair hair falling across his forehead. There was an added resolution in his face which had not been there until the last few days. He had always been quick, impulsive, full of energy, full of ideas, independent; but now there was a look in his face which gave it firmness, stability, as though he had taken a great resolve and would carry it through or perish in the attempt.

It has been mentioned before that Mrs. Quain used to compare him in her mind, half jokingly, with the great Napoleon; she suddenly seemed to perceive that this comparison might be something more than the whimsical tenderness of a devoted mother. By contrast with the faces of the men and boys who passed and repassed them in the Park she could not fail to note, even when an allowance had been made for maternal prejudices, a light in those blue eyes and a strength about that mouth and that jaw which betokened a personality far above the average. And, at the thought of

it, a wonderful pride took possession of her. He would do something in the world, this fair-haired son of hers; she saw in a flash that he was destined for great things, and she resolved, whatever happened, that she would do all in her power to strengthen and aid and encourage him.

All of us have great thoughts at times, but few of us betray them to those who may be with us when the thoughts come. It would seem as though there was something sacred about a noble thought, so that it must be shielded from the slightest breath of criticism or misunderstanding until it has grown big enough and strong enough to be brought from the hiding-place of the brain and set in its nakedness before the world. It was in a very ordinary tone, therefore, that Mrs. Quain replied to Hannibal's statement that something had happened.

"Has it? What?"

"To begin with, I am going to be married."

"Married!"

"Yes."

"But I knew nothing of this."

"Didn't you? Didn't you even guess when I went off on Saturday?"

"No. At least —"

"I think you did, Mother. I think you must have realized that, if it had been anything else, I should have told you about it. I would have told you if I had felt that I could tell anybody, but

I hate people to know about things until they are quite definitely settled."

"It is definitely settled, then?"

"Yes. I am going to be married this week!"

"Hannibal!"

"I'm afraid it must be rather a shock, but I couldn't tell you anything about it until I knew myself, could I?"

"When did you know yourself?"

"This morning."

"But you came back from the country yesterday?"

"Yes, but it wasn't definite then. I had to find three thousand pounds to start my new paper."

"Three thousand pounds! For your new paper! You mustn't tell me so many things all at once unless you want me to have a fit of hysterics or something equally foolish. After all, I am only a woman and a mother. You must make some allowances, Hannibal."

So Hannibal gently told her everything — how he had been in love with Sheila ever since he climbed over the wall one day to recover the cricket-ball; how he had made up his mind, when his father died, that he must earn enough money to keep his mother and his brothers, and to put his brothers out into the world; how he had conceived the idea of his new paper; how he had ridden down to Clinton Bagot to secure a helpmate;

how he had won Sheila, and made a friend of her mother, and battled with her father; of the condition imposed by Mrs. Gillfoyle; of the meeting with the rich American by the roadside; of the visit to the lawyer's office that morning; of the business of procuring the marriage license; of the hunt for and eventual discovery of the quaint little set of chambers.

When he had finished, Mrs. Quain was silent for some minutes. At last she said:

"How old is Sheila?"

"Seventeen," said Hannibal.

"You asked her, of course, whether she loved you?"

"Yes."

"And she told you that she did?"

"Yes."

"She is too young and too innocent to deceive you. I only hope that she is not deceiving herself. Still, I have thought, for some years past, that marriage is one of the few things that will not bear reasoning about. The wisdom of older people, when applied to marriage, is often sadly misplaced. If I obeyed my impulse, Hannibal, I should at once go down to Warwickshire to see Sheila for myself, but I shall not do that. You have asked her to marry you, she has consented, and you have, at least, as good a chance of making a success of your married life as any other people of whatever age.

“ I am not rich enough to help you very much with your furniture, but whatever can be spared from home you must have. Don't protest, dear. Let me do the little that lies in my power at this important crisis in your life — far more important than you in your impetuosity can foresee. The only other thing I can do is to wish you both every happiness, every success, and God-speed. . . . Now, my heart is too full to talk any more to-night. Let us go back to the house.”

VII

“ YOU AND I ”

THE sitting-room of the little flat in York Buildings had undergone a most marvelous change. Instead of being a quaint, empty, and rather dusty garret, it had now become the cosiest and cheeriest little office imaginable. There were blue curtains drawn back from the old-fashioned lattice-windows; there were flowers on the broad window-sill, flowers on the mantel-shelf, flowers on the top of the book-shelves, flowers wherever flowers could be bestowed: every third day, indeed, a box of flowers arrived from Clinton Bagot Rectory, addressed in the clear if rather spiky handwriting of Mrs. Gillfoyle, or the equally clear though smaller handwriting of Mr. Gillfoyle.

There were no flowers, however, on the large table that occupied the center of the room, for that was loaded with all the paraphernalia of journal-making. And there were no flowers on the little side-table, for that was devoted to a typewriting machine and the necessary equipment. There was, it is true, a carpet on the floor, and it had been chosen to match, as nearly as possible,

the window-curtains; but a carpet, as Hannibal pointed out, was really a superfluity in this room, for the floor was already inches deep in all kinds of literary litter.

There were two very comfortable armchairs, one on either side of the fireplace; there were some good framed prints on the walls; there was an editorial armchair for Hannibal; there was another arm-chair conveniently placed for a visitor; that pretty well completed the list of furniture in the office-sitting-room.

Peeping past the curtain that hung over the entrance to the bedroom, you would have seen a room in strong contrast to the sitting-room. Sheila quite understood that, by all the conventions of journalism, you cannot edit a paper without making an unholy mess of the room in which it is done; she was quite reconciled to that. But she was equally firm on insisting that the bedroom should not become merged in the office. If Hannibal ventured to leave any of his proofs, or letters, or manuscripts, lying about in the bedroom, they were quickly flung back into the office. This was a wise rule for a girl of seventeen to draw up; it symbolized, in a way, the necessity of maintaining a sharp distinction between the business life and the private life. Happy the wife of a public man who can maintain this distinction!

The honeymoon of Mr. and Mrs. Hannibal Quain may be regarded as unique; certainly, one

knows no other instance of a bride and bridegroom spending their honeymoon in preparing the first number of a new weekly journal. Yet they were far happier, it may safely be said, than the more conventional couples who hurry away to the discomforts of a foreign hotel, or the isolation and discomfort of a country cottage, or the staring snobbishness of an English watering-place.

Hannibal was happy because he was in a home of his own with Sheila there to share it, his imagination aglow with the glorious possibilities of the future, and his mind occupied with the enthralling work of the present. Sheila was happy because she was in a home of her very own, because Hannibal was there to share it, because she was seventeen, and because the whole world, of which as yet she knew no evil, smiled upon the seventeen-year-old bride. Everything interested them, everything amused them. They were amused at the gentleman with whom Hannibal had made arrangements for endeavoring to provide the paper with advertisements. They were amused at the gentleman who had kindly undertaken to print the paper. They were amused at the gentleman who was to publish the paper. They were amused at the small boys who came from the printer's office with the bundles of proofs. They were amused at the postman, who began by grumbling bitterly at having to climb so many stairs, but who was presently induced to take a keen human

interest in the forthcoming journal, and would even linger for a moment on his busy round to tell Hannibal exactly what to print and what not to print. Hannibal learned a lot from that postman.

They were amused at the old lady from the basement, who toiled up to their little flat twice a day to wash up, make the bed, dust, sweep, and generally put things in order. Most of all, they were amused at Mr. Hamm.

The American was completely satisfied, at present, with his investment. He delicately remained away from the office until, as a postscript to a business letter, Hannibal requested him to call and meet his wife. In two minutes, Mr. Hamm had become one of Sheila's faithful slaves. He would call at about three o'clock in the afternoon, immaculately dressed in the very height of London fashion. He would leave his beautiful top-hat on the mat outside in order that it should not take up space required for editorial business. He would seat himself quite in the corner, watching Hannibal and Sheila as they worked, but carefully refraining from speaking one single word unless directly addressed. Every now and again, he would steal gently from the room, slip noiselessly downstairs, and away to the Strand or Covent Garden, returning presently with a beautiful bouquet, or a chicken ready for the oven, or a basket of fruit, or a cake, or a huge box of chocolates,

or a pound or two of the best sausage (because Sheila had once said that she loved sausages).

Sometimes he would be followed by a boy from the fishmonger's, staggering beneath a huge lump of ice for the ice bucket. He had the queerest way, too, of discovering in his waistcoat pocket a couple of stalls for the theater that he had quite overlooked and could not possibly use himself. There were never three stalls, for Mr. Hamm, though he had had no honeymoon himself, quite understood that this experience in life was better suited to two people than to three.

Discovering one day that Sheila was musical, he disappeared for at least three hours, and, when he returned, was followed by two men carrying something that appeared to be fairly heavy up those narrow stairs. This, when unpacked, proved to be a tiny little piano — so small that Sheila roared with laughing over it, and then clapped her hands at it, and then walked round it, and then laughed again, and finally felt very near to crying because everybody was so good to her, especially Hannibal and Mr. Hamm. The American explained, with some diffidence, that there were larger pianos to be had in London, but he didn't wish to place any undue obstacle in the way of the launching of “ You and I.”

“ But where in the world did you find such a thing? ” asked Sheila, taking him into the kitchen to help with the preparation of the dinner.

(When we say "into the kitchen," we are not forgetting our previous statement that the kitchen could not hold more than one person at a time. Mr. Hamm stood outside the door, from which position he could keep an eye on the sausages while Sheila was busy with the frying of potatoes.)

"Well," explained Mr. Hamm, "it was not the easiest thing in the world, Mrs. Quain, to find precisely the article of which I was in need. In America, my country, when we ask for a thing we can confidently expect to be supplied with the article for which we have asked, but, in this delightful country of yours, it is evidently the impression of ninety-nine storekeepers out of a hundred that their customers do not really know what they do want, and they consequently endeavor to sell him something which they consider should be better suited to his taste and requirements. I went in search of the very smallest piano that London could provide. I was offered a dozen grand pianos, three dozen baby-grands, six dozen upright-grands, twelve dozen cottage pianos, three spinets, a church organ, and a delightful instrument which the storekeeper was kind enough to describe as an American organ. Putting all these alluring articles gently but firmly aside, I went from store to store, asking for the smallest piano in London — not a doll's piano, which they were also kind

enough to offer me, but a piano that could be played upon — real tunes.

“ At last I had the good fortune to hear of a store where they kept all kinds of outfit for traveling comedians, and it was from this store that I purchased the very humble little instrument which you have been good enough, Mrs. Quain, to accept. . . . The third sausage from the end looks to me kind of black underneath. Might I venture to turn him over with this fork? ”

Day by day, the first number of the new paper drew nearer completion. Hannibal had held closely to his original idea, the only trouble being that there were at present no letters from readers to answer. Everybody the young couple knew, therefore, had to be pressed into the service. Mr. Gillfoyle wrote asking the age of Sir Walter Scott at the time of his death, the length of the Box Tunnel, the weight of a million penny postage stamps, the distance from the earth to the moon, what to do with the green flies off roses if you were unwilling to destroy them, and whether it was possible to grow spring onions in the autumn?

Mrs. Gillfoyle, with a wise eye to Hannibal's business, asked for the address of a first-class registry office for servants, of the best place for storing furs during the summer, of the best firm from whom to buy cutlery, and even whether the

editor could recommend any particular species of toilet-soap.

Hasdrubal, dashing into the fray, asked to be supplied with the address of a trustworthy firm that thoroughly understood the manufacture of air-guns, pistols, and Norwegian fishing-knives. He also demanded to be told what was the lowest point touched by the thermometer on the coldest day of the year in Iceland, and what was the highest price ever given for a remarkably fine species of a Belgian hare.

Socrates, patient and thorough, sent in no less than three hundred questions, all of them most carefully numbered, and written in copper-plate writing on foolscap paper specially procured. Most of his questions bore upon abstruse subjects connected with the human body, to which the Editor replied in a terse note in which he advised his correspondent to try the "British Medical Journal."

The postman, cheerfully working overtime, brought his own questions. He asked to be informed whether an ordinary postman had ever been promoted to the rank of Postmaster-General, and, if not, why not. He drew the attention of the Editor to the fact that the postal business had increased enormously during the past ten years, while the number of postmen had not increased in proportion.

Hannibal politely pointed out to him, when

next he called, that this was more in the nature of a statement than a query, whereupon the postman took it home with him, and redrafted it in the following form: Honored Sir, seeing that there is a Big Increase in the number of Letters now Posted compared with what there was ten years ago, would you kindly inform Yours Respectfully how many Postmen was employed in the London Postal Area ten years ago, and how many there is to-day? ”

Even the housekeeper propounded her little queries. Coaxed by Sheila, she confessed to requiring information on the following points:

- (a) How to scare mice from a house when any one don't like keeping a cat?
- (b) What was the legal penalty for giving a servant girl who was a thief, a liar, and a slattern, a smart cuff over the head?
- (c) Could anything be done to prevent rude boys from calling after respectable ladies when they went out to do a bit of shopping?
- (d) The best way to make use of cold fat when it was too good to throw away?
- (e) Was the bite of a beetle dangerous? If so, what was to be done before the doctor arrived?
- (f) How far was it from England to Australia, and, if any respectable person had a son in Australia that they wanted very

much to see, but could not afford the fare, would the Government make a grant towards supplying a return passage in the steerage?

The wrapper for the paper was a matter for serious consideration. Sheila thought that a pink wrapper decorated with blue forget-me-nots would be rather sweet, but Hannibal pointed out that any penny paper which endeavored to give its readers a wrapper printed in two colors would soon find itself in Queer Street. In delivering this statement, he unconsciously assumed the tone and attitude of the great Sir Albert Curtain, who had once replied in like manner to a brilliant suggestion coming from Hannibal himself.

Mr. Hamm wanted green, but Hannibal reminded him that this would be a flagrant imitation of a successful journal already in existence. Hannibal himself was for a deep orange, but the whole question was eventually settled by the printer, who proved, in two minutes, with the aid of a very small piece of paper picked from the floor and a very short, stumpy pencil, that the cost of a colored wrapper would so far exceed the sum which Hannibal had decided to expend on paper and printing that it was quite out of the question to have one at all. Reluctantly, therefore, the first number was issued without a wrapper.

The first number was issued! Stated like that, it all sounds simple and straightforward enough,

but, oh, the hopes and fears, the doubts and anxieties, the lying awake at night trying to hit upon something that would at once arrest the attention and fasten upon the imagination of the public! That was what was wanted, as Hannibal knew well enough — something to seize upon the imagination of the public. It was all very well for Sheila to attempt to console him by reminding him that the paper was unique; that there had never before been a paper entirely devoted to answering the queries of correspondents. Hannibal admitted all that, but he knew, right inside the one little brain-cell in which his genius for journalism was harbored, that uniqueness was not in itself enough. Anybody could devise an unique journal; a journal printed in green on black paper would be unique, but the public would not buy it.

No, there was *something* to be done to make a success of “You and I,” but he could not think of it. He had not enough money to indulge in the luxury of huge posters on the walls, or full-page advertisements in the daily papers. True, on the day of publication he had an almost continuous chain of men, with copies of “You and I” in their hands for sale, from Piccadilly Circus to St. Paul’s Cathedral. That was all right in its way, but any fool could have thought of that. What he wanted was something bigger, something more human, something more daring, something that would make the editor of every other popular

paper in London gnash his teeth with rage because he had not thought of it himself.

"If only I could think of it!" he exclaimed, walking to and fro, to and fro, on the eve of publication.

"Don't worry yourself any more about the matter, dear," replied Sheila. "You've done your level best, and, if the people don't like it, it simply shows what a lot of fools they must be."

"Fools! Of course they're fools! I don't blame them for that! If there were no fools in the world, d'you suppose that I should be troubling my head to bring out a paper of this sort at all? The more fools the better! But what I want to get hold of is something that will make every fool in the kingdom, and every clever person as well, rub his eyes with surprise when he sees my placard. Yes, I've got as far as that: it's a line on a placard that I want; that's all, and I can't think of it! I can't think of it!"

"Sit down and have your dinner," urged Sheila. "It's sure to come to you — everything does; you know that."

"Yes, but the pity of it is that it hasn't come in time for the first number."

"Probably you will get the idea before you bring out the second number."

"That won't do. If you don't hit them between the eyes in your first number, you might as well throw up the sponge at once, unless you've

got unlimited capital at your back. I shall never forgive myself for not getting that idea in time for the first number!”

He tried to eat the nice little dinner that she had cooked for him, but how could a man sit still and eat under such circumstances? As Hannibal saw it at the moment, and as any other boy of his age would have seen it, his whole career depended on his single throw. If the public took to his paper, well and good; that was almost too glorious for thought! If the public did not take to his paper, the three thousand pounds would be rapidly exhausted, and where would he find another good fairy like Mr. Hamm? He knew that there are plenty of men who will back a man who has yet to make his mark, but how many men are there who will back a man who has had his chance and made a failure of it?

For the thousandth time, he took up the first number of “You and I” and turned the pages one by one.

“I’ll tell you what it is,” he said. “It’s monotonous.”

“Rubbish!”

“Yes, it is; it’s monotonous — beastly monotonous. Just look at all these rotten questions and all the rotten answers! A child could see that the questions were faked! Besides, the public must jump to it that we *had* to fake the questions! It’s all as wrong as it can be! Tell me quite

frankly — would you pay a penny for it yourself? ”

“ Yes, of course I would! Why, the answers to the questions on Cookery alone are worth a penny! ”

“ Yes, but they’re all out of Mrs. Beeton! ”

“ My dear boy, all the answers are out of some book or other. ”

“ I know. That’s just it! That’s what makes it so dull! ”

“ Dull! ” cried Sheila, who now began to feel so depressed about the whole thing that she could easily have flung herself on the bed and burst into tears. “ I won’t hear you say a word against the paper, Han! There’s not a dull line in it! If we begin to think it’s dull, it’ll soon get dull, and that will be the end of it. Say it’s not dull! Do, darling! Do say it’s not dull! I — I shall really have to cry if you say it’s dull after — after all the work we’ve done! ”

Hannibal jumped up, put his arms about her, and kissed her passionately.

“ No,” he said, “ it isn’t dull, my beautiful! Besides, I don’t care if it is! Hang the paper! Hang the public! Hang everybody and everything! We’ve been sitting up here too long. Let’s go for a walk. ”

Sheila was ready in a trice. “ Which way shall we go? ” she asked, looking very sweet and pretty in her demure little bonnet.

“ To the printer’s,” said Hannibal, promptly.

Sheila laughed. It was so like him to hang the paper and the public, and then go straight off to the printer’s. Her spirits returned as they stumbled down the narrow stairway arm-in-arm, and she felt quite gay when they climbed to the top of the ’bus that would take them to the printer’s.

As they went along, Hannibal scrutinized the public.

“ Look at all these people, Sheila! Do you suppose they care a rap about my new paper? Do you suppose any single one of them even thinks that the first number of ‘ You and I ’ is to be published to-morrow? If they do know, do they care? Just look at them as they walk along. Look at that chap gazing into the eyes of his girl; is he telling her to be sure and buy a copy of ‘ You and I ’ to-morrow? ”

“ He might be.”

“ You little humbug. You know very well that he’s doing nothing of the sort. He may be telling her how pretty she is, or how glad he is that she was able to come out with him, or be trying to persuade her to come out to-morrow night, but he’s certainly not caring a rap about our new paper. And that’s just what we’ve got to bear in mind always: the people don’t want us — we want them. They can get along very well without us — we can’t get along at all without them. The

only way to get hold of them is to get right inside their lives, so that our paper is as much a part of their lives as the boots they put on in the morning, or the dinner they eat, or the pillow they put their heads on at night. If we can do that, we can make such a success as has never been made before in this country or even dreamed of!"

"You will," said Sheila, simply.

"Do you really think I shall?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Can't tell you why. I just know it." And Sheila did know it.

Hannibal, of course, was accustomed to printing-works, but to Sheila it was all quite new and amazing. The noise deafened her, and the vast tangle of hungry machines bewildered her. She thought, at first, that they were all printing "You and I," but Hannibal soon undeceived her on this point. However, they did at last discover the machine which was devoted this evening to their own little paper. The quiet and almost insolent demeanor of the man who was minding it came as a shock to Sheila. He would take up a large sheet, look at it, and crumple it up and throw it away as though there had been no care, and thought, and even anguish spent upon it. The other men were just as unmoved: they came and went about their business, pale, with shirt-sleeves rolled up, some of them wearing dirty aprons,

some of them with smudges upon their noses, but all quite indifferent to the fate of poor little “ You and I,” which was to be born on the morrow.

If it failed, as many a weekly journal printed beneath that roof had failed, what cared they? There were plenty of other idiots eager to waste their money on bringing out new papers. So long as the machines were never silent, so long as the furnaces were never out, so long as the wages were paid every Saturday, it did not matter a straw to these men which papers lived or died, what hearts were broken, what fortunes were lost, which editor went to the asylum, or which to the workhouse, or which to prison, or which to the grave. Stroke the fires! Trundle the big rolls of paper! Cut, and fold, and bind, and pack, and shoot them into the carts; and the evening and the morning made the next day.

No wonder Hannibal and his baby wife felt very small and insignificant as they stood there amid the crash and rattle of the printing-machines!

They had been watching their own particular machine for some ten minutes or so when Mr. Dodd, the manager, came along. It was nice to see his friendly, familiar face amid those of so many strangers, and Hannibal was cheered by the sight. Mr. Dodd smiled, and raised his hard felt hat to Sheila, and shook hands with Hannibal, all as though it was the easiest thing in the world

to bring out a weekly paper and sell huge quantities of it to the public.

"Just been on the 'phone to Mr. Halliday," said Mr. Dodd.

Mr. Halliday was Hannibal's publisher.

"Yes," replied Hannibal, trying manfully to keep his voice quite steady.

"You've seen him this evening, Mr. Quain?"

"Not since three o'clock this afternoon. Anything fresh?"

"Yes. I shall have to put on another machine."

"*What!*" cried Hannibal and Sheila together.

"Tells me he's got repeats from Glasgow, Newcastle, Cardiff, and one or two other places. Silly fools! Why couldn't they make up their minds before?"

Mr. Dodd moved away to give the necessary instructions to his foreman. Hannibal and Sheila looked at each other. Their cheeks had suddenly become flushed, and their eyes sparkling, and their breathing quicker. Then Sheila, quite regardless of the men with pale faces and dirty aprons, seized one of Hannibal's hands and gave it a tremendous squeeze.

"Oh, how *lovely!*" she shouted through the din. "It's going to be a success, Han! I *knew* it would! I've felt it all along!"

"Too soon to say that," observed the wise Hannibal.

“ Not a bit of it! Just think — Glasgow, Liverpool, Cardiff! Fancy those places such a long way off all sending for more copies! Isn’t it wonderful? ”

“ First numbers always sell well,” Hannibal told her, with the air of a weary and experienced and long-established proprietor of journals. “ Wait till we get to our second and third numbers; that will be the test.”

None the less, he went to bed far more sanguine than he had been for the past month. There was something definite and substantial, at any rate, about repeat orders from the “ Trade.” It showed that there actually were people prepared to take some sort of an interest in his venture. His little paper would not be stillborn. Within a few hours, some thousands of copies of “ You and I ” would be distributed over the length and breadth of the land. He had become accustomed, of course, to see copies of the “ Boy’s Chum ” on bookstalls and in newsagents’ shops, but this was a very different feeling. The “ Boy’s Chum ” had been issued from the great and influential office of the “ London Weekly Album,” and had the money and the authority of the great Sir Albert Curtain behind it. “ You and I ” came from a humble little garret in York Buildings, Adelphi. It was the outcome of his own brain, his own energy, his own work.

True, he had had Mr. Hamm’s three thousand

pounds to help him, but what was three thousand pounds with which to float a new paper? He knew very well, and had known from the start, that nothing but an instantaneous success could make it possible for him to continue on that capital. If he scored an instantaneous success, Mr. Hamm would reap a harvest entirely out of proportion to the small sum invested. Hannibal was not jealous of Mr. Hamm; he was quite prepared to share with him equally according to the strict letter of the agreement; but he did feel, as he went to bed that night, that one might have to pay very dearly for one's capital.

VIII

THE GREAT IDEA

THE first number of "You and I" sold quite well — not phenomenally well by any means, but quite satisfactorily. Sheila was in the seventh heaven of delight. She went about on dancing feet, her eyes all alight, her face a posy of dimpling smiles. She had secret dreams of a beautiful house in the country, with a lovely old garden, and a pony and trap of her own. She buckled to on the third number — the second number was complete before the first was published — with tremendous zest. Her little fingers flew like lightning here and there among the great books of reference. She was getting so used to them that she could find the answer to any question, that was not too impossible, in a minute. Her ready brain and sanguine temperament were of enormous value to Hannibal in those early days. He would be the first to acknowledge it; indeed, had he not foreseen it all along?

As for Hannibal himself, he was naturally pleased that the first number had sold well, but he repeatedly reminded himself, as he had told

Sheila at the printer's, that all first numbers sold well. He could remember a conversation with a wild acquaintance of his earliest days on the "Boy's Chum," who had a great scheme for bringing out an entirely new paper once a week, and never to attempt to get beyond the first number. So Hannibal, too, worked away with a zest at the third number, but put away his secret dreams of a great fortune. He knew what Sheila did not know, namely, that there was very little left of the three thousand pounds after paying for the advertisements, and the printer's bill, and the various other expenses. There was something to come back, of course, but his own advertising pages were ruefully blank until filled at the last moment with extra editorial matter or "dummy" advertisements — that is to say, advertisements inserted for nothing as a decoy for other advertisers.

With the second number, a check was put to Sheila's splendid rapture. The sales of the second number dropped to less than half the sales of the first. It was pitiful to note the gradual disappearance of the dimples — they did not all vanish, but at least half of them went — in exact proportion to the decrease in circulation. The little fingers still flew busily in and out of the books of reference, but the answer would not come quite so quickly, and the books seemed rather heavy to lift.

Hannibal worked on. He was beginning to

look pale from want of fresh air and want of sleep. Such exercise as he got nowadays was taken at night, when he would pace up and down the Embankment searching for that Great Idea. He searched for it in the sky, and he searched for it in the water, and he searched for it in the faces of the miserable human beings huddled on the seats, and he searched for it in the outline of the Houses of Parliament, and he searched for it on the distant dome of St. Paul's Cathedral, and he searched for it in the great sullen barges that were anchored in midstream.

With the third number, the sales again dropped. At this rate, the three thousand pounds would be gone long before the end of three months. Mr. Halliday, the publisher, did not take the trouble to come to York Buildings to see Hannibal on the matter; he sent a small boy with a rather dirty note, curtly requesting Hannibal to come and see him. Hannibal detected insolence in the note, and insolence in the messenger; in all probability, he imagined this insolence, for, when things are going wrong, it is easy to find enmity and mockery in the very paving-stones. However, he swallowed his pride, and called upon Mr. Halliday.

“Well, young man,” said Mr. Halliday.

“Well, Mr. Halliday,” said Hannibal.

“Your paper doesn't seem to have struck the public all of a heap?”

"Did you ever hear of a prize-fight which was won in three blows?" retorted Hannibal.

"No," said Mr. Halliday, "but a man who is going to win a prize-fight must hit hard all through the first round."

"Any fool can do that," replied Hannibal. "A clever fighter would have something in reserve."

"If he kept it in reserve too long, Mr. Quain, he might be knocked out before he had time to make use of it."

"Would that be for him to decide or his trainer?" asked Hannibal.

"It would depend on how much he knew, and what the trick was worth."

Hannibal was perfectly aware that Mr. Halliday was trying to find out how much capital there still remained to the account of "You and I." He knew, also, that this information must be withheld from Mr. Halliday. It would not be at all good for Mr. Halliday's health to realize just how little money there was to Hannibal's name at the bank. Mr. Halliday might lie awake and worry, and that would be a pity. He left the publisher, therefore, with the impression that there was a wonderful card to play when the right moment came. After all, he might still draw that card. Any night, as he paced the Embankment, up and down, up and down, up and down, the Great Idea might come to him.

The fourth number of "You and I" came out, and the fifth, and the sixth. Hannibal did not tell Sheila how many copies of the sixth number had been sold, nor did she inquire. It was pathetic to note the difference between the Mr. and Mrs. Hannibal Quain now working away in gloomy silence at the little paper that nobody seemed to want, and the bright, clever, eager, smiling, sanguine boy and girl who had feasted so merrily with Mr. Hamm only a few weeks ago.

Mr. Hamm's visits to the little flat in York Buildings had almost ceased. He knew only too well how things were going, and, while he was sportsman enough not to begrudge the loss of his three thousand pounds, he was also man of business enough to realize that it was of no use throwing good money after bad. He would have liked to help the young couple personally; he would have liked to send them to the seaside for a month, or for a trip across the Atlantic, or to the little shooting-box that he owned in Scotland. He knew very well, however, that they were too independent in mind to accept any such offer. Once a week or so, he just mounted the stairs, popped his head in at the door, and gave them a cheery word or two. He never asked how things were going, and he never stayed to lunch or dinner. His kindly heart ached to think that perhaps they were even denying themselves the necessary quantity or quality of food.

Mr. and Mrs. Gillfoyle knew nothing of these struggles. The honeymoon was still barely over if one allowed a honeymoon to last more than the conventional month, and, though Mrs. Gillfoyle was naturally anxious to see her daughter and her daughter's home, she would not as yet intrude upon them. Every week a copy of "You and I" was delivered at the Rectory, addressed in Sheila's handwriting. Mr. Gillfoyle was delighted to find all his questions duly answered, and spent many happy hours concocting long lists of fresh "puzzlers," as he called them. The good people never suspected for one moment that the little paper was almost at its last gasp. There is something about the printed word which, to the ordinary mind, is solid and permanent; Mr. and Mrs. Gillfoyle, as they watched the small pile of the copies of "You and I" grow higher and higher, would have said, at a rough guess, that the paper was now as firmly established as the "Times."

Mrs. Quain had her suspicions, but she would not harass her son by asking to have these suspicions confirmed. She had the greatest faith in Hannibal, and she told herself that, if the worst came to the worst, and the paper failed to survive, Hannibal would be sure to think of something else.

In this she was probably right, but Hannibal was determined that the paper should survive.

Sheila, to tell the truth, had lost faith in it; she would not have confessed as much to Hannibal for worlds, but when he was keeping his lonely vigil on the Embankment — for he preferred to go alone — she would shed many and many a silent tear.

One morning, the morning upon which the sixth number of the paper came out, a telegram came from Mr. Hamm requesting Hannibal to call upon him at the Albany. Hannibal did not show the telegram to Sheila. He knew well enough what it was that Mr. Hamm had to discuss, for, by that morning's post, he had heard from their banker that the account was overdrawn.

The grave manservant, who had apparently succeeded in once more making his master afraid of him — at any rate, he still retained his situation — showed Hannibal into the luxurious sitting-room, handed him a cigarette, a copy of "You and I," and informed him that Mr. Hamm would be with him as soon as he had dismissed his barber.

"Do you ever read this paper?" asked Hannibal.

"Well, yes, sir, I've glanced through it once or twice."

"Do you like it?"

"No, sir, I can't say that I like it."

"Why not?"

"It doesn't appeal to me, sir."

"Why doesn't it appeal to you?"

"There's too much information in it, sir, for my taste."

"Don't you like information?"

"No, sir. Information is all very well for those who have no desire to think for themselves. If I filled my brain with information, such as how to grow spring onions in the autumn, or how to cure the bite of a beetle, my brain would be so clogged up, so to speak, that it wouldn't be able to turn round. I may be wrong, sir, but it has always seemed to me that, if the brain doesn't turn round, it can't develop, and, if it can't develop, it can't get beyond the point that it has already reached. For that reason, sir, I am always very willing to impart information, and very unwilling to receive it. . . . Can I get you anything further, sir?"

"No, thanks," said Hannibal.

This man's point of view, he saw, was quite reasonable. He had probably made the mistake of thinking that the public wanted to acquire information, whereas, or so it would seem, they wanted nothing of the sort. They wanted to use such brains as they possessed: was that it? No. That could not be the solution of the difficulty, for the desire to use one's brains is a sign of mental energy, and Hannibal was quite convinced that very few people have sufficient mental energy to carry

them through the ordinary labors of an ordinary day, much less an excess of mental energy to be expended after the work of the day is over, on mere thought. Yet they wanted something different — that was quite clear. What weakness was it in them to which he must pander in order to succeed? Vanity? Avarice? Fear? Sentimentality?

Mr. Hamm, cool, sleek, exceedingly well-groomed, entered whilst Hannibal was still deep in his problem.

“Good morning, Mr. Quain.”

“Good morning.”

They shook hands — energetically but not warmly. Mr. Hamm, was, if anything, the more nervous of the two.

“I took the liberty, Mr. Quain, of sending you a telegram.”

“Yes.”

“I presume, Mr. Quain, you received a certain intimation this morning from the Bank?”

“I did.”

“Well, I cannot tell you, Mr. Quain, how more than sorry I was to receive that intimation — not sorry for myself, but real sorry for you. I am not in the habit, Mr. Quain, of scattering orchids over the heads of my friends, but I do wish to say that, in my opinion, you have produced a rattling, bang-up, thundering smart little paper, and it just beats me crazy why it is the public have not re-

sponded to your call in the way that we hoped. Had your journal appeared in the States, Mr. Quain, where there is a very large public for any periodical with fresh ideas and strong brains behind it, I can promise you that it would have met with a very different reception. However, that's neither here nor there. What we've got to do is to sit right down now and face this thing out."

"Yes," said Hannibal.

"You will remember the terms of our contract, Mr. Quain?"

"Perfectly."

"By that contract, I was free to withdraw from this undertaking when the capital that I put up had been exhausted."

"That is quite correct."

"Or I was at liberty to retain my half-interest by providing more capital."

"Quite so. But —"

"Hold on a minute, Mr. Quain. If you will allow me, I would just like to say what I have in my mind to say, and then I shall be at liberty to hear any comments that you may care to make upon my remarks. Now, Mr. Quain, as I have told you, I think a very great deal of your little paper. It is new, it is original, it is human, it touches on an extraordinary variety of topics, and it is my firm conviction that it should have been a very big success. But the public, Mr. Quain, is a curious element. I don't myself believe that

there is any man in this country, or in any other country, however intelligent and experienced, who could say with certainty how the public is going to think about any mortal thing on this earth. The only way to find out what the public wants is to offer it something and note the result. Well, Mr. Quain, hard as it may seem to you, I'm afraid the public, for some reason or another, does not want your paper. We can't deceive ourselves by saying that it isn't sufficiently known; a very large number of the public bought the first number, half of those people abstained from buying the second number, and the rest have gradually left off buying it. We must now face these facts.

“ Now, Mr. Quain, the failure of your paper — if you will allow me for one moment to use that unpleasant word — does not, to my mind, reflect in the slightest degree on your ability, or on the ability of the very charming little lady who has rendered you such splendid assistance, and whose notes on ‘ Cookery ’ are marvels of lucidity and salubrity. I have unshaken confidence in you both, and I asked you to come and see me this morning in order that I might lay before you the following suggestion :

“ Accept the verdict of the public, Mr. Quain, with regard to ‘ You and I.’ Wind up the affairs of that brilliant but unfortunate publication as soon as possible, and then think of something else

equally original, bring it to me, and, if I am taken with it, as I feel sure I shall be, I shall have the very greatest pleasure, and it will be a great honor to me, and a source of considerable interest, to provide you with a further sum of a similar amount to the last. That's what I wanted to say, Mr. Quain. What is your reply?"

Hannibal looked out of the window. The measured words of the American had fallen upon his heart with the weight of small bullets. He had known, directly he received Mr. Hamm's telegram, what he was to hear, but he had scarcely expected to be told, in that downright fashion, that his paper was a failure. Mr. Hamm was accustomed to failure in the world of sport; but Hannibal was accustomed to success in everything that he touched, and it was bitter in the extreme to be told to admit to failure. He was mortified, and, with anybody else, would have been very angry. But it was impossible to be angry with Mr. Hamm. He was evidently so sincere in his admiration of the abilities of Hannibal himself and of Sheila, so sincere a friend, and so generous a supporter, that Hannibal's mortification was tempered with a feeling of deep affection that threatened to bring the tears to his eyes. After all, he was only nineteen, he had worked desperately hard, he was suffering from loss of sleep and loss of fresh air; he had nothing to sustain him but his confidence in himself and his love for

Sheila. Fortunately, these were sufficient to enable him after a very brief pause to face the American with a manner as perfectly composed as usual.

“It’s awfully good of you,” said Hannibal, simply, “but I can’t accept your offer.”

“Don’t be in too much of a hurry to say that, Mr. Quain. Why not take a little longer to think it over?”

“I have thought it over. There are two reasons, Mr. Hamm, why I can’t accept your offer. The first is that I couldn’t possibly allow you to risk any more of your money on any enterprise of mine.”

“Now, see here —”

“Wait a minute, please. I came here this morning quite determined to say that. You’ve done already a great deal more than I could possibly have expected; that goes without saying. It is useless for me to tell you, now that your money has gone, how deeply sorry I am that this should have happened, but, if I ever succeed at all, as I am quite certain I shall succeed, every farthing of that money will be repaid. Please let me finish! The other reason why I cannot accept your offer is because I am going on with the publication of ‘You and I.’ You may think me quite mad, but I have a feeling, which I cannot explain even to myself, that I shall yet pull my little paper out of the fire. The capital is ex-

hausted, but I have still some credit left, and the biggest firms in the world depend, to a very large extent, on their credit. Those are my reasons, Mr. Hamm, and I am sure you will understand and appreciate them."

Hannibal rose and held out his hand. Mr. Hamm grasped it, and there was now all the warmth in the grip of the two men that had been lacking at the beginning of the interview.

"Mr. Quain," said the American, "I am certain as you are that you will eventually make a very big success. You have splendid qualities, sir, qualities that should carry you right to the top. It isn't for me to say anything further with regard to my own opinion of the business possibilities of your paper. I can see that you are determined to carry on to the last moment, and I admire your pluck, and wish you a magnificent success. I have backed out, and you mustn't, therefore, think for one moment of making me any repayment. I have had my gamble, and I have enjoyed it — especially the many pleasant hours I have passed at your home, the recollection of which I shall always cherish in my memory. Should you change your mind about my new proposition, please let me know without delay. If I am still in the financial position which I enjoy to-day, if your delightful fellow-countrymen have allowed me to retain the requisite amount of hard cash, you will find that the offer still holds good."

Hannibal was now in the last ditch. He did not tell Sheila of his interview with Mr. Hamm: that was unnecessary. He tried very hard to take a bright and optimistic face back to the office, but Sheila was not deceived. Very wisely, she asked nothing. They both worked away doggedly for the rest of that day, not stopping to wonder whether the fruits of their labors would ever reach the outer world. It was ten o'clock before the last proof was read and the last batch of new copy was ready for the printer. Sheila then laid supper, and they talked on indifferent topics while they pretended to eat it.

At eleven o'clock, although it was raining slightly, Hannibal, in accordance with his usual custom, went out. The nights were getting chilly now, and Sheila made him put on an overcoat. It was a coat suitable for the hour and the weather, for it had long seen its best days. With the collar turned up, and a cap on his head, and his hands thrust deep into his pockets, Hannibal looked very much like the unfortunate people who were congregated beneath the bridge of Charing Cross railway station.

He walked along the Embankment, on the river side, as far as Blackfriars Bridge; then, turning, he proceeded to walk to Westminster Bridge. He was still feeling, although it was almost mechanically now, for the Great Idea that would not come. He was still searching for it in the sky, and in

the water, and in the faces of the people huddled on the seats, and in the outline of the Houses of Parliament, and in the silent barges that tugged moodily at their anchors in midstream.

Presently his attention was caught by the face of a man seated in the corner of a bench midway between Hungerford and Westminster Bridges. He was a man about forty years of age, clean-shaven, save for the usual three or four days' beard. He was not asleep, or even in the somnolent condition that is habitual with the Embankment loafer; he looked keenly at Hannibal, just as Hannibal looked keenly at him; each recognized the other as a man of breeding and education. Hannibal had often heard that such men were to be found on the Embankment at night, but he had never seen one before, and was beginning to look upon the story as the usual fable of the imaginative journalist. There was no doubt, however, about this man, and Hannibal was seized with a desire to learn something of his history. How was it that a man of his own class could sink to becoming a night-loafer on the Embankment? Was it drink? No; he had not at all the appearance of a man who had been dragged down by drink. Was it poverty? Yes, of course, but *why* should a man with brains and reasonable health be utterly destitute? Was it sheer laziness? Surely there must be something abnormal about a man who preferred this wretched slinking

existence to the small amount of work that would have sufficed to keep him in moderate comfort, cleanliness, and respectability.

Hannibal turned at Westminster Bridge, and walked once more in the direction of Blackfriars. He was trying to summon up his courage to take the other end of the seat and get into conversation with the stranger. As he drew near, however, the stranger himself broke the ice by saying, in tones that must have been at one time quite cultivated, but had now become coarsened, partly by the life he led, and partly by the wish and very natural desire to avoid any suggestion of superiority to those with whom he mixed, "Got a fag?"

"Certainly," said Hannibal, at once stopping and taking his case from his pocket.

The stranger took a cigarette from the case with the air of one who had often done the same thing before. "Got a match?"

Hannibal took out his silver match-box, struck a match, and held the flame so that the stranger might light his cigarette. The other accepted the civility quite as a matter of course. Hannibal now seated himself in the opposite corner of the bench, and also lit a cigarette. The stranger smiled — a smile that was three-parts cynicism and one-part humor.

"A couple of drinks," he said, "and we might be in the club."

"Yes," agreed Hannibal, trying to speak as

though there was nothing out of the ordinary in the situation.

"Journalist?" asked the stranger, calmly.

"Yes," said Hannibal, rather startled. "How did you guess?"

"Easy enough. You're not hard up or you wouldn't be carrying a silver cigarette-case and a silver match-box. You've got gloves on, too; that means prosperity. Hope they're paying you well for this job; it's worth it on a night like this."

"Oh, I'm not collecting copy. I come out here at night because it helps me to think."

"Think? What about?"

"Well, just at present, I'm trying to think of something to put on the bill of a weekly paper that'll startle everybody in the kingdom."

"Very difficult," said the stranger.

"Very."

"What paper is it?"

"A little paper called 'You and I.' It's a new paper," explained Hannibal, modestly.

"I've seen it," said the stranger.

"Have you?" Hannibal was frankly delighted. Here, at any rate, was one member of the public who had heard of his paper.

"Yes. I was one of the men selling the first number."

"Great Scott!"

"Anything funny in that?"

“ Well, no, I suppose not. I — I didn’t notice you; that’s all.”

The stranger laughed. “ Well, seeing there were about a thousand of us, I don’t suppose you would. Are you the Editor of the paper? ”

“ Yes, I’m the Editor.”

“ You needn’t tell your boss, but I did him for two-and-ninepence that day.”

“ Oh, you did, did you? ”

“ Yes,” drawled the stranger, carelessly. “ You can give me in charge if you like. It isn’t so easy to get a dry bed for the night, I can tell you.”

“ Do you really mean that you wouldn’t mind being locked up? ”

The stranger laughed again. “ That wouldn’t be any novelty, my young friend. They’re tired of me at Bow Street. They’re on to the game. At one time, I could get locked up for the night, or for a week, or for a month, just whichever I liked; I knew exactly how far to go. But they won’t lock me up now until they can make a good job of it. They’re quite willing to give me five stretch, but that doesn’t suit my book. I should get very tired of it long before the finish. That’s my temperament; I can’t stick at anything. Got another fag? ”

“ Certainly.” Hannibal again produced the silver cigarette-case, and again the stranger, with an easy air, helped himself.

“ Yes,” he continued, as though he enjoyed talking to a man of education, “ I’m the result of what is known as versatility. As a boy, I was the admiration of my parents, especially my poor silly mother, and the envy of most of my school-fellows. I could do anything, from taking a watch to pieces to making an occasional fifty at cricket. The trouble with me was that I couldn’t put the watch together again, and I couldn’t be relied upon at cricket even to break my duck. I was clever at amateur theatricals, but I never knew my lines, and I couldn’t act for toffee if I didn’t get the best part in the piece. I could write an essay on any subject you like in ten minutes, and it read well when it was done, but there was nothing to it when you came to consider the meaning. I had all sorts of tricks for remembering the stuff we had to learn by heart, and I could sail up to the top of the class next morning as easy as easy, but ask me what I’d learned a week later, or even forty-eight hours, and I wouldn’t know a blessed word of it.

“ It was just the same when it came to trying my luck in the world. My father wanted me to be a barrister, and I was mighty clever at cross-examination among my pals, but I never passed the examinations — couldn’t be bothered. Then I took to your game — journalism — as most of them do, and I should have got on splendidly at that if I could have started at the top. But the fool editors always stuck me at something dull,

such as reports of small meetings, when I wanted to be on a big murder job, and that soon gave me the stick. The old man sent me to South Africa to earn a fortune, and I made a lot of friends very quickly in Durban, but I saw there were no fortunes to be made unless you got a job and stuck to it for years. By this time, I had tumbled to it that I should never stick to anything, so I stayed at the Cape, having a pretty good time, until the old man refused to cough up any more cash; then I came home again.

“A year or two later, the old man died, and I found I'd already had all that was coming from that quarter. I sponged on my other relations for a bit, but they soon got tired of it; besides, they were all as poor as rats themselves. So then I took to anything that came handy — selling papers, busking, extra gentleman at the theaters, sandwich-man, pavement artist, selling matches, minding horses, touting at race-meetings, begging, singing in the streets, Salvation Army, Church Army, picking pockets, collecting ends of fags, hop-picking, sailing, minding bathing-machines, stealing chickens, poaching, amateur burgling, stealing dogs, gardening, running errands, lifting luggage off cabs — *you* know; all the usual things. Upon my word, that sort of life suited me better than anything else I'd ever touched. I didn't begin like it, but I soon got like it, and the cause of the whole business was just what I told you at

the start — versatility. And my poor silly mother used to be proud of it.

“ She used to get me into the drawing-room, when she had a party, and make me show the folks how clever I was. Naturally, I got to think I was a very high-class piece of goods. Work wasn’t good enough for me; there wasn’t a job going where I could show off half of my blooming gifts at once; so I took to loafing — that was the only game where my versatility came in useful. If you’re born versatile, you’re born a loafer. That’s my belief, and I could point to fifty instances of it along this Embankment any night you like. Versatile? Half the chaps on their uppers started by being versatile and then did like me — no good to anybody, anywhere, or at anything. If ever you get a kid, Mister Journalist, and you notice any signs of his threatening to be versatile, you take a stick and whack it out of him before he’s ten years of age, and see that his mother does the same. Got another fag? ”

All through his career, Lord London has remembered this interview on the Embankment and the warning it brought with it. As a matter of fact, he was himself born with the dangerous gift of versatility. We said in our second chapter that he might have become a professional musician, an actor, a dramatist, a theatrical manager, a war correspondent, or even a poet. Had it not been for this casual but none the less effective little

homily, we might have seen him in almost as many capacities as the Kaiser himself. By his determined concentration on the one business which he knows he thoroughly understands, Lord London has done a real service to humanity at large by proving that even the hydra-headed monster called Versatility may be scotched.

"At any rate," he said, "you've had a varied experience."

"Yes," agreed the stranger. "I should be a useful man in a newspaper-office, if I hadn't got to do any real work."

"How can a man be useful on a newspaper who doesn't work?"

"My good young friend, that remark, without your very youthful appearance, would have told me that you were new at the game. It isn't the men who work that get the prizes in this world; it's the men who have the brains to set others working. I don't suppose your mamma would care to hear me preaching these sentiments to you, but this isn't exactly a Sunday-school, and, anyway, they're true. The sort of job that would suit me in a newspaper-office is a sort of consulting expert in ideas. I should sit in a comfortable armchair, just like this, smoking cigarettes, just like this, and you would drop in and tell me you wanted a notion for a brilliant out-of-the-way article. I should light another cigarette, take up the daily paper and in ten minutes you would get

your idea. I shouldn't write the article myself — please understand that. Rather than write the article myself, I would keep the idea to myself, but, given the idea, anybody could write the article. Now you see what I mean, don't you? ”

“ Perfectly,” said Hannibal. “ Let's start right away. We're not in my office, and we haven't got a daily paper, but you've got a cigarette, and I've just popped in. I want a line for my weekly bill which, as I told you, will startle everybody in the kingdom. Now, take your ten minutes, and show me what you can do.”

The stranger again smiled his mirthless cynical smile.

“ You'll get on, young man.”

“ I hope so.”

“ Yes. You'll get on. You've got brains of your own, but, what is more important, you know how to make use of other men's brains. There's just one thing I'd like to warn you about.”

“ What's that? ”

“ Never make the mistake of trying to get other men's brains for nothing.”

“ I don't want them for nothing.”

“ Don't you? ”

“ No.”

“ Aren't you trying to get mine for nothing? ”

“ No. Give me a winning idea, and I'll pay you for it.”

"How do I know that?"

"By your knowledge of character."

"That's a good answer. But I shouldn't know where to find you."

"Yes, you would. Here's my name and address."

The stranger rose, walked as far as the nearest lamp, and carefully read the card. This done, he placed it in a pocket of his waistcoat, returned to the bench, and settled down again with great concern for his bodily comfort.

"Pleased to know you, Mr. Quain. Let me return the compliment. Godfrey Brandon, at your service. Sounds like a pseudonym, doesn't it?"

"It does."

"Well, it is. I make it a rule to have a fresh name for every fresh job. And I suit the name to the job. When I was selling your paper, I was Bill 'Arris. Now I'm promoted to the editorial staff, I'm Godfrey Brandon."

"Pleased to meet you, Mr. Brandon," said Hannibal, gravely.

"Thank you, Mr. Quain. I see by your card that your chambers are not very far from here."

"Quite correct," replied Hannibal. "I live in York Buildings."

"I know York Buildings. Had a room there myself for a time some years ago. Curious how one always feels drawn toward the places one has known in one's youth, isn't it?"

“D’you feel drawn to York Buildings?” asked Hannibal.

“Well, I’ve not sunk so low as to force myself on any man’s hospitality, Mr. Quain. At the same time, I think you will agree with me that the brain works more readily when the body is fortified. Some people don’t understand that; I give you credit for more intelligence. It is now half-past twelve, and the public places of refreshment are closed. There are, of course, such things as coffee-stalls, but I never find the general atmosphere of a coffee-stall conducive to brilliant inspirations. May I ask whether you’re married, Mr. Quain?”

“Yes, I am,” said Hannibal.

“Then it’s off.”

Hannibal thought rapidly. Mr. Brandon was certainly an uncommon personality, and it might be that under the influence of a little plain food and a whisky-and-soda, he would happen to hit upon the human all-appealing line of which Hannibal was so badly in need. Mr. Brandon was desperately shabby, but he was not, on closer inspection, aggressively dirty. Sheila would certainly have gone to bed, and would be spared the necessity of meeting this unexpected visitor.

“No, it’s not,” he replied. “Come along, Mr. Brandon. My home is also my office. Let’s stroll round there.”

Without another word, they crossed the Em-

bankment, and proceeded in the direction of York Buildings. It was still raining, and the crowd of homeless people under the railway-bridge had grown to large proportions. Some of the men spoke to Mr. Brandon as he passed, but he vouchsafed no further reply than an airy wave of the hand which held the lighted cigarette.

"Poor company, most of them," he told Hannibal.

"Here and there, perhaps, a man with brains, but the rest you'd find exceedingly dull, Mr. Quain. It's the same, of course, in every walk of life. Men of ideas, such as ourselves, experience a great difficulty in finding suitable companionship. If I knew nothing of your world, I might regret the circumstances which have rendered it necessary for me to pass much of my time with these commonplace people, but, in reality, the talk that one hears under these bridges at night is much the same talk that one hears in the clubs, save, perhaps, that the phrases and expressions employed by your friends in the clubs are a little lacking, to a man who has knocked about the world as I have, in point and the touch of acidity which is necessary to make any conversation palatable. . . . Ah, dear old York Buildings! Just the same as ever! How long will this little backwater of London be safe, I wonder, from the hand of the vandal?"

Hannibal opened the front door very quietly,

and Mr. Brandon, taking the hint, followed him up the narrow staircase on tiptoe. Hannibal gave him a comfortable chair, mixed him a drink, and then slipped into the bedroom to reassure Sheila. Fortunately, she was fast asleep. He returned to the sitting-room, closing the door of the bedroom very gently behind him. There was some food on the table, for Sheila knew that, though Hannibal could not always eat immediately after finishing his work, he often came in hungry from his walk. Seating himself at the head of the table, he invited Mr. Brandon to join him, an invitation which was promptly, though not ravenously accepted.

During supper, Mr. Brandon did not talk very much. He took great care to eat as though he had had the usual number of meals during the day; this showed Hannibal that the man's pride was not entirely killed. After supper, Hannibal mixed him a second whisky-and-soda, placed the cigarettes near him, and begged him to talk in an undertone because Mrs. Quain was asleep.

Mr. Brandon, with the air of an expert, took up a copy of "You and I" and critically studied the pages.

"A nice little paper," was his verdict. "A very nice little paper, Mr. Quain, but there's far too much information in it. People don't want such a lot of information; they want to be amused, and interested, and advised. That's a curious

thing — the amount of advice that people can swallow. Ninety-nine men out of a hundred will listen to advice by the hour on anything. They don't care a bit who advises them: they'll take advice on matters of health, for instance, from a man who knows no more about health than a jackass in the wilderness knows about the solar system. In my time, I've run across commercial magnates, and I've advised them how to double their fortunes; they've listened to me, and I shouldn't mind betting it's had an influence on their operations the next day.

“I've advised singers about their throats, and painters about their subjects, and sailors about the management of ships, and soldiers about the best kind of food to march on, and jockeys about how to win races. I'm the sort of man you always hear talking in the bars of public-houses, and in railway-trains, and places like that. I never know what I'm going to talk about until I begin, but that doesn't matter a jot; people take it all in — drink it down as sweetly as possible.

“The only class of people I could never get to take any advice was the theatrical class. Actors, I mean. It's a curious thing, Mr. Quain, but an actor will never believe that anybody can tell him anything. Whatever he does, it's bound to be right. And an actor is the only man you can't talk down. I don't know what it is about them, but they've got a way of getting the atten-

tion of the whole company, and then talking about themselves and their past triumphs until you wonder how it happens that such an extraordinary man should be content with anything less than a thousand pounds a week."

"I don't wish to seem inhospitable," Hannibal interposed, when he found an opportunity, "nor do I wish to jar on your pet weakness by asking you to keep to the subject in hand, but I must remind you, Mr. Brandon, that we came up here for a specific purpose, namely, to see if you could give me a line for my weekly bill."

"That's true, Mr. Quain. I'd quite forgotten it. You see the sort of chap I am. Now, I think you said you wanted a line that would startle everybody?"

"That's what I want."

"It must be a short line?"

"Yes."

"And a human line?"

"Yes."

"And a line that will rouse their curiosity to the extent of making them buy your paper?"

"Certainly."

"Just give me a moment."

Mr. Godfrey Brandon leaned back in his chair, closed his eyes, and described vague circles with the thin wisp of smoke from his cigarette. He remained in this attitude for nearly ten minutes, until Hannibal feared that his guest might have

gone to sleep. Just as he was about to rise and prod him gently with the end of the poker, Mr. Brandon suddenly opened his eyes and fixed Hannibal with a piercing stare. Hannibal was not exactly a nervous subject, but he retained his grasp of the poker.

“My God!” whispered Mr. Brandon.

“What’s the matter?”

“I’ve got it!”

“Got what?”

“*It.* Give me a piece of paper.”

Hannibal handed him a large sheet of blank paper and a large blue pencil. Mr. Brandon wrote rapidly a few words in capital letters, and then held up the paper at arm’s length, so that Hannibal could read it from where he sat.

Hannibal looked at the paper. The effect upon him was extraordinary. He shot up from his chair, went over to Mr. Brandon, seized the paper, gripped the hand that had held it, and wrung it heartily.

“*Great!*”

“You see it?”

“See it? I should think I do see it! I’ll plaster England with that bill to-morrow! You’re a splendid fellow, Brandon! You shall come on my staff, and have a room to yourself, and a constant supply of cigarettes, and be my consulting expert on ideas! Have another drink! Help yourself! Now I must think how it’s to be done! The

printers and publishers are all in bed, and, of course, snoring! Everybody's always in bed and snoring in this country! Never mind! It'll give me time to think how it's to be done! By Jingo, what a glorious line for a bill!"

He returned to his chair and buried his head in his hands; every now and then, he heard a gentle gurgling noise as of whisky poured into a glass, followed by the short hissing of a soda-water syphon. Hannibal did not look up. He was still busy with his thoughts.

To-morrow he must take two steps that would either ruin him or make him. The first step was to carry out his boast of plastering England with the bill suggested by Mr. Godfrey Brandon. That would be a very difficult, and a very bold, and a very risky step, but he was like a man who, walking along a narrow path overhanging a ravine, suddenly comes to a point where he must jump for his life or perish. He cannot go back: he cannot go forward unless he jumps. The gap in the path is wide, and the landing on the opposite side is crumbling and treacherous. Looking down, he can see, hundreds of feet below him, the upturned rocks that indicate the bottom of the ravine. Yet there is no help for it. Even if the jump were an impossible one for any human being to accomplish, it would be better to attempt it than to linger on that narrow ledge, amid that awful loneliness, and perish of starvation. But — and

this is the important thing — the leap is not impossible. Others before him must have accomplished it. Others before him must have found themselves in that identical situation, and escaped with their lives. On the morrow, therefore, he would take the leap.

The other important step he had determined to make, partly as the result of his conversation with Mr. Hamm's grave manservant, and partly because the manservant's words had been almost echoed by Mr. Brandon, was an entire change in the character of his paper. Those who know anything of Lord London's methods, will have observed that he is never above listening to any opinion, no matter how humble or inexperienced the speaker. Indeed, the humbler and more inexperienced the better, for he thus gets really into touch with the thoughts of the public.

As Hannibal Quain, he allowed himself to be influenced in the same way. Twice that day he had been told that there was too much information in his paper, and by men of such widely different temperaments and habits as the grave manservant and the poor penniless drifter over the surface of the globe. Hannibal felt that they must be right. If the public did not want a paper stuffed with information, it was no use trying to cram it down their throats. If they wanted to be amused, if they wanted little bits of jocular nonsense, and a little homely talk, and a story full of coronets

and thrills, they should have all these things. It would mean very hard work; it would mean much more expense on the editorial side; these expenses and this extra work must somehow be met. . . .

“Yes, the poster, combined with the change of policy, ought to do it. . . . If it did not do it, he did not know . . . what . . .

And still the whisky gently gurgled and the syphon hissed. . . .

At five o'clock that morning, Sheila awoke. To her surprise and alarm, Hannibal had not returned. She slipped out of bed, pulled on her dressing-gown, and opened the door of the sitting-room.

On one side of the fireplace, in the full glare of the gas, sat Hannibal, fast asleep. On the other side of the fireplace sat a strange shabby man, also fast asleep, and breathing very thickly. By the side of the strange shabby man stood a small table, and, on the table, a whisky decanter, quite empty.

Between them, on the hearthrug, lay a sheet of paper, upon which was inscribed, in large blue letters, these words:

| |
|-------------------------------|
| ONE POUND A WEEK FOR LIFE! |
|-------------------------------|

IX

SUCCESS

“**O**F course it'll make the paper sell like wildfire,” said Sheila, “but suppose you can't go on paying the money? It seems awful to think of paying anybody a pound a week as long as they live.”

It was six o'clock in the morning. Mr. Brandon had gone, and Hannibal, who absolutely refused to go to bed, was drinking a cup of tea preparatory to dashing off to see Mr. Halliday. He had told Sheila all about his meeting with Mr. Brandon and of their conversation, and of Mr. Brandon's affection for York Buildings, and the sudden discovery of the Great Idea. Sheila had listened; then rebuked him for his rashness, and then forgiven, and then put the kettle on to boil.

“I've thought it all out,” said Hannibal. “What you do is to buy an annuity. If the person who wins the prize —”

“What prize?”

“Why, the pound a week for life.”

“But what will they have to do to win it?”

“ Oh, I’m not bothering about that yet. There’ll be plenty of time to think that out after we’ve got out our poster. I needn’t even announce the details of the competition in the next issue. I shall just tell them enough to excite their curiosity, and promise full details the following week. That’s how you make a competition pay; you don’t expect a large sum of money like this to sell merely one issue; you spread out the announcement of the competition and the result over several issues. That keeps up the excitement and the sales. Do you realize, Sheila, that this is the most sensational prize ever offered by a newspaper? ”

“ I should think it is! I think you must be mad, Han! ”

“ Yes, I may have gone a little mad last night, but it’s a good thing to go mad sometimes. You get your inspirations in a moment of madness, and then you think out the details when you’re sane. I’m sane enough now, and I’m beginning to think out the details. In the first place, of course, the amount you have to pay depends upon the age of the winner.”

“ Oh, you don’t mean to say that you’re going to pick out some poor old thing about ninety! ”

“ Oh, no. That would spoil the whole business. The prize will go, fairly and squarely, to the winner; all I mean is that the older the winner happens to be, the better for us. After I’ve seen

Halliday, I shall call at one of those big offices where they insure people's lives and pay annuities, and see how much they want for an annuity for a person, say, thirty to forty years of age. I should think seven to eight hundred pounds ought to do it."

"But, my dear Han, we haven't got eight hundred pounds, have we?"

"We soon shall have when the paper begins to sell. The advertisers will see what a splendid idea this is, and our spaces will go off like hot cakes. In the meantime, if necessary, one can always borrow. . . . I haven't time to shave. Just rout me out a clean collar, old girl, and I'll be off."

"There's no hurry. Mr. Halliday won't be at his office as early as this."

"If he isn't, I'll go to his house and pull him out of bed. Good-by! Wish me luck!"

"I wish you all the luck in the world," said Sheila, kissing him. But she looked more than a little anxious as she watched him disappear down the stairs.

Mr. Halliday was not at his office, so Hannibal jumped on a 'bus, and went to his private house. Mr. Halliday's kitchen-maid was scrubbing the front steps.

"Mr. Halliday at home?" asked Hannibal.

"Mr. 'Alliday?"

"Yes. This is his house, isn't it?"

" Oh, yes, this is 'is 'ouse."

" Well, is he at home? "

" Mr. 'Alliday's abed."

" Then he must be at home. Just tell him Mr. Hannibal Quain has called, will you? "

" Mr. 'Oo? "

" Mr. Hannibal Quain. And tell him the matter's very urgent. Look sharp, my girl! "

" But 'e's abed," repeated the girl.

" Yes, you said that before. He's not ill, I suppose? "

" Oh, no, 'e ain't ill. At least, not as I knows on."

" Then take up my card. I'll wait in here."

Hannibal walked past her and entered a room on the right. The girl, following, peered at him through the crack of the door. As Hannibal showed no signs of stealing the sideboard or the carpet, or the dining-table, she at last went slowly up the stairs, holding the card before her at arm's length as though she had met one of those things before and been rather badly bitten by it. Several minutes elapsed, and at last the girl returned, looking half scared and half indignant.

" Well, is he coming down? "

The girl shook her head. " If you please, sir, Mr. 'Alliday said 'as 'ow I was to tell you to go somewhere."

" To go somewhere? To go where? "

" I don't 'ardly like to say, sir."

"But you must say. It's very important. Where did Mr. Halliday say I was to go?"

"If you please, sir, to the devil."

Hannibal considered. "Is Mr. Halliday married?" he asked.

"Yes, sir."

"Oh. . . . Is Mrs. Halliday at home?"

"No, sir. She's dead."

"Recently?" Hannibal had no wish to intrude upon the grief of the widower.

"Beg pardon, sir?"

"I said, how long is it since Mrs. Halliday died?"

"Well, sir, I wasn't here meself at the time, but I understand it was fourteen year ago."

"Thank you. I suppose Mr. Halliday sleeps in the room over this one, doesn't he?"

"Yes, sir, that's right."

To the girl's astonishment, Hannibal once again brushed past her, ran up the stairs two at a time, and went straight into Mr. Halliday's room without knocking. Mr. Halliday, who looked older and less important in bed than sitting in his office, turned his head on the pillow and stared at Hannibal for several seconds without seeming to comprehend what had happened. Then, raising himself a little, he demanded angrily:

"What the devil does this mean?"

"Good morning, Mr. Halliday," said Hannibal.

"Leave this room!" thundered Mr. Halliday, pointing dramatically to the door.

"Don't be silly," said Hannibal. "I've come to put money in your pocket."

"I don't care what you've come for! It's a piece of confounded impertinence bursting into my room like this!"

"I know it is, but it's also a great compliment, Mr. Halliday. I've called upon you at this early hour because I believe you're the one man in all London who is worthy to handle the greatest journalistic scheme on record."

"Mad!" muttered poor Mr. Halliday, fumbling for the bell-rope. "The boy's mad!"

"No, I'm not mad, Mr. Halliday. But I want you to get out of your bed at once and come along to your office. I told you I'd a card up my sleeve to make my paper a huge success; now's the time to play it. Shall I pull the clothes off for you?"

"Certainly not!" screamed Mr. Halliday. "You dare to lay a finger on this bed, and I'll send for the police and have you locked up! Nice thing, upon my word, if a man can't have his proper night's rest without every young jackanapes in the country coming bursting into his room and wanting him to get up at a moment's notice! What do I care about your idea? You and your paper can go to the devil together! And just keep your distance from this bed! D'ye hear?"

Hannibal, quite unruffled by all this noise,

seated himself at the foot of the bed and looked very gravely and earnestly at Mr. Halliday.

“If you weren’t such a quick-tempered man,” he began, “you might make a great deal more money. It’s no use your pretending that you don’t want to make more money, because I know very well that you do. If you really wish me to go to some other publisher with my idea, I’ll do it, but it might be worth your while to hear what I have to say. That’s better. You can lay your head back on the pillow; but don’t shut your eyes or you might go to sleep again, and there are already far too many people asleep in the city of London.

“Now, Mr. Halliday, can you get me fifty thousand double-crown posters printed and distributed to the newsagents and advertising contractors to-day?”

“No,” snapped Mr. Halliday, “I can’t.”

“Why can’t you?”

“Because I can’t. I’ve got a full day’s work before me as it is.”

“And yet you lie snoring here the best part of the morning?”

“You mind your own business.”

“I am minding my own business. And, what’s my business, is your business. I’m going to have those fifty thousand posters, Mr. Halliday, and here is the matter for them.” He handed Mr. Halliday the sheet of paper with the large blue

lettering on it. "That makes you gasp, doesn't it? You know very well that those fifty thousand posters, with that announcement on them, will send up the circulation of 'You and I' to half a million copies. If you like to get up now and put the matter through, I'll go and call a cab and have it ready for you in ten minutes. Under the circumstances, you needn't wash very much this morning. If you prefer to stay in bed, say so, and I'll go to some other publisher. But let one thing be quite clear, Mr. Halliday; if I go to another publisher, I remain with that publisher, and you lose one of the best prizes in the Trade. Now, let me have your decision. Bed or business — which is it to be?"

"I'll do it," said Mr. Halliday, "but I shall want a cup o' tea, mind."

"Right. I'll go down and tell that highly intelligent servant of yours to make you some tea."

"Oh, don't tell *her*. Tell the cook. I won't be more than ten minutes."

Hannibal, before he left the room, had the satisfaction of seeing Mr. Halliday pattering across the room in his nightshirt.

In the cab, Mr. Halliday showed that he had left his bed to some purpose. He was by no means lacking in imagination, and the magnitude and daring of Hannibal's scheme appealed to him. He advised Hannibal not to bother his head about

where the prize-money was to come from until the time drew nearer for it to be paid. Then, if the circulation and advertisement-revenue responded in the way they might expect, he was not at all sure that he, Mr. Halliday himself, would not be prepared to advance Hannibal a sufficient sum to purchase the annuity.

Hannibal dropped him at the door of his office before eight o'clock, much to the surprise of the charwoman, and much more to the surprise of the yawning clerks who arrived a little after nine o'clock. He then drove back to York Buildings, and set to work to get the new and brighter material for his paper, and to think out a competition that would be easy enough to appeal to everybody, and yet not so easy that more than one person would be likely to win the prize. It was highly necessary that the pound a week for life should not be split up among three or four people.

It will be within the memory of many that he eventually decided to ask his readers to forecast the number of births in the United Kingdom for the month of October. In order that there should be no suspicion of a lottery, he did not demand an entrance fee, and was careful to give them the statistics for the ten previous Octobers. Each reply, however, had to be accompanied by a coupon cut from the paper.

The result was staggering. From the very hour that the first posters appeared, Mr. Dodd's

machines were kept hot turning out copies of "You and I" by the thousand. The Public suddenly went mad over "You and I." The competition became the favorite topic of conversation — at dinner-parties in the West End, in suburban drawing-rooms, in country towns, in small villages, and in the far-distant Colonies. Hannibal had to engage a suite of offices for the clerks who were required to deal with the coupons. The demand for advertisement-spaces presently grew so insistent that every inch, so to speak, meant gold. Hasdrubal was suddenly hauled out of school and set to manage the counting-house; he at once justified his appointment by showing a genius for finance. A little later, Socrates was also called in to assist with the new venture.

But that, together with the effect of this sudden and glorious success of Hannibal and his little bride, belongs to another chapter.

X

THE USE OF VICTORY

SOMEbody with a talent for the obvious has said that success is harder to bear than failure. The number of men who have been able to use an early success as a stepping-stone to greater victories is so small that these men stand out as landmarks in the histories of their various callings; the number of men, on the other hand, who have been ruined by an early success is legion. The fable of the Hare and the Tortoise would never have become a classic had the Hare possessed a larger amount of moral stability than the average hare.

Hannibal was no ordinary hare. He proved that by his actions immediately following on the huge success of "You and I." Many people were affected by this success. The first person to be affected was his mother, who suddenly found herself transported from the little house in St. John's Wood, which was no longer big enough for her growing sons, to a very charming residence on the breezy heights of Hampstead.

We have already seen how Hasdrubal and Socrates were affected. Now was the time for

Hasdrubal to fulfill the oath which he swore on the word of the Quains, when Hannibal freely forgave him a certain debt of twopence. Hasdrubal, impressed by the magnanimity of his eldest brother, had on that day said, "I'm your man for always!" Hannibal did not remind Hasdrubal of this oath; there was no need for that. He knew that Hasdrubal had not forgotten, and Hasdrubal knew that he knew it. And now, to the free pardon of the debt of twopence, Hannibal had added this sudden and glorious emancipation from school, had placed him in a position of great responsibility, and was paying him, considering Hasdrubal's tender years, a very handsome salary.

We have said that Hannibal's wisdom in selecting Hasdrubal as his Chancellor of the Exchequer was swiftly justified. Hannibal, to tell the truth, was never a born financier. Money, to him, was never a concrete substance. He looked upon money rather as the conqueror of a rich but undeveloped country might look upon a full river of fresh water. As a plentiful supply of water is necessary to the prosperous development of a country, so Hannibal knew that a plentiful supply of money was necessary to the prosperity of his business. But he also felt that that bounteous stream must not be stored away in huge casks in some enormous underground cavern; it must be turned this way and that, to refresh and

stimulate and invigorate all his enterprises. It was the fluid quality of money, in short, that appealed to him; so much may be done, he saw, with a powerful fluid of this nature, particularly if the supply was practically inexhaustible.

Hasdrubal also saw the wisdom of this policy, but he brought an innate gift of science to bear upon the stream. While he never attempted to persuade Hannibal to adopt the cask-and-cellar system, he began, on his own responsibility, to build huge reservoirs in which to store the valuable fluid in case of a sudden and unexpected drought. So the two brothers worked harmoniously side by side, Hannibal drawing freely upon the full-flowing river, while Hasdrubal husbanded the spare supplies, and was careful to stop all leakages.

Socrates, the third Quain boy, was drawn into the office rather by way of an experiment. He was a peculiar boy. Rather slow in speech, shorter in stature than his brothers, blandly innocent in appearance, he might have frittered away the most valuable years of his life attempting to persuade proprietors of papers that he had a gift for journalism. But Hannibal had observed that Socrates, though he spoke comparatively seldom, either in or out of the family circle, always spoke to some purpose. Socrates, evidently, was a thinker. When a problem of life presented itself to his intelligence, Socrates would first of all

regard it gravely, and steadily, and in silence for quite a long time. He would then gradually approach the problem, place, so to speak, one paw firmly upon it, presently add another paw, and at last, with great deliberation, bury his mental teeth in it. When Socrates was thus engaged, it was of no use whatever trying to attract his attention to other matters. He would not leave his problem until he had turned it this way and that, opened it, examined it inside and out from every point of view, and, after a process of resolute and methodical mastication, finally swallowed it.

This is precisely what Socrates did with the problem of popular journalism. Hannibal brought him into the office, gave him his own room, and left him to investigate the problem. Nothing came of this investigation for quite a long time, and then, one day, Socrates also justified Hannibal's confidence by bringing to his brother an idea for a weekly paper that would make its appeal to the sisters of all the youths and young men who were now the stanch supporters of "You and I."

"Tell me about it," said Hannibal, leaning back in his magnificently-upholstered leather chair, and balancing between his thumb and forefinger a heavy gold pencil-case, a small gift from a group of prominent advertisers on the completion of the first year in the life of "You and I."

"There is really very little to say about it," replied Socrates. "I shall tell them everything

they ought to know and nothing that they ought not to know."

"What ought they to know?"

"They ought to know how to make things — how to make dresses, how to make blouses, how to make beds, how to make puddings, how to make jam, how to make a home. They ought to know how to bring a diffident lover to the point. They ought to know how to keep themselves fit in the summer, and how to keep themselves fit in the winter. And there must be a certain amount of jam — nice little verses on sentimental topics, golden thoughts from golden minds, and quite a long, complete story each week of a healthily exciting nature, in which virtue and wickedness will struggle hard up to the last paragraph, and love will triumph over all at the very finish."

All these things Socrates said quite gravely; there was not the slightest suggestion of banter or cynicism in his tone; it was the policy of the brothers to believe in their public, not to sneer at them. Hannibal may once have said in a moment of impetuosity that the more fools there were in the kingdom, the more papers he could sell, but he did not really mean that. He had impressed upon Hasdrubal, and also upon Socrates, that you must believe in your public before they will believe in you. He had no use for the man who came to him with his tongue in his cheek; that was why,

rightly or wrongly, he avoided young gentlemen from the Universities. Socrates had fully mastered this guiding principle, and he spoke as sincerely of his new paper as though it were a vast scheme for the illumination of Darkest Africa; which, in a sense, it was.

Hannibal approved the idea, and began to press innumerable buttons on his desk which summoned the chiefs of departments to the Great Room. The chiefs of departments came quickly; they were the quickest chiefs of departments in any office in London. They often surprised themselves by their own quickness, but, however quick they were, Hannibal was always a little bit quicker.

In half an hour, the main details were settled—the quality of the paper, the type, shape, color of wrapper, number of pages, day of publication. The chiefs of departments went their ways, full of excitement and enthusiasm. Socrates alone remained.

“What are you going to call it?” asked Hannibal.

“I’ve fifty-seven titles here for you to choose from.”

“Read them out.”

So Socrates began to read. He read thirty-three titles without meeting with any interruption from Hannibal. The thirty-fourth title was “Rosemary.”

"That'll do."

"Good," said Socrates.

"Is that the one you wanted?"

"Yes."

"Why didn't you say it first?"

"Because you wouldn't have chosen the first."

"Why wouldn't I?"

"People never do."

"Don't apply any process of reasoning to me, Socrates. I know what I want directly I hear it. Let me see your dummy this afternoon."

And thus "Rosemary," which may be found this very day in nearly a million humble homes, had its birth.

Of the other brothers, Virgil was now at Eton, Galahad at Harrow, and Anthony at a first-class preparatory school. Little Ajax remained, for the time being, with his mother.

Mr. and Mrs. Gillfoyle were affected, in a less degree, by the success that had come to Hannibal. Their first intimation of it was a large pile of orange-colored copies of "You and I" lying on the counter of the village Post Office. When Mr. Gillfoyle inquired the reason of this sudden interest in his son-in-law's journal, he learned from the Postmaster, who was also the grocer, the chandler, the boot-seller, and the village librarian, that everybody in Clinton Bagot was going in for the pound a week for life. The Postmaster further assured him that a similar

state of things prevailed in all the neighboring villages.

Hurrying home to Mrs. Gillfoyle with this exciting news, he overtook the postman, who handed him a letter from Sheila in which she stated that Hannibal was sending her down to the Rectory for rest and fresh air, her services being no longer needed on the staff of the paper. Sheila arrived a day or two later at the nearest railway-station in a first-class carriage, surrounded by the latest books published, the newest magazines, the more expensive ladies' journals, and other evidences of prosperity. The very next morning, a beautiful little phaeton stood before the front door, with a strong and steady pony between the shafts, and an equally steady coachman on the box. Hannibal had remembered that Mrs. Gillfoyle had often expressed a wish for a vehicle into which and out of which she could step with ease, and in which she could visit her friends in the neighborhood. He didn't do things by halves; a supply of money had been deposited with the manager of the local bank for the upkeep of the phaeton, the pony, and the coachman, and he had even remembered to instruct the banker to pay the yearly tax.

Among the many other people who were affected by the new condition of things must be mentioned Mr. Godfrey Brandon. Mr. Godfrey Brandon had not been slow to realize his

luck in stumbling across a line for the bill that Hannibal had been able to fasten upon and turn to wonderful account. He duly presented himself at the office in York Buildings, and was promptly sent out to get himself shaved, and washed, and decently clothed. He returned a week later, attired in a second-hand suit that had been made to fit a man twice his size, and bearing in his face the marks of a week's orgy.

"This isn't what I meant," said Hannibal.

"Isn't it what you expected?"

"Yes, I'm afraid it is."

"Then why did you give me the money?"

"To make sure."

"What's the next move?"

"That depends on yourself. If you're wise, you'll let me send somebody with you to get the clothes and pay for them. Then I'll give you the position I promised you, instruct my cashier to pay for your board and lodging, and give you a small amount of pocket-money each week."

"Thanks," said Mr. Godfrey Brandon. "I'd rather be in jail."

"Then what do you expect me to do for you?"

"Just give me a hundred pounds and let me go."

"You're a fool," said Hannibal.

"I know that."

"You mean it?"

"Yes."

"Very well. You must sign a paper relinquishing all further claims upon me."

"All right."

"Here you are," said Hannibal, handing him the check.

Mr. Brandon laughed his own peculiar laugh. "What d'you expect me to do with that?"

"Can't you get it cashed?"

"Likely, isn't it?"

"Oh, very well. Call this afternoon and you shall have the money in cash. Good-by."

Hannibal held out his hand and Mr. Brandon took it.

"Thus," he said, "Success and Failure go their ways. It was good of you to keep your word when you might easily have denied that you ever set eyes on me in your life. I should have been quite useless in your office, even if I had ever turned up, which is not at all likely. You say I'm a fool, and I can see you pitying me. That's another sign that you don't know everything, young man. You'll be called a Success by the world, and, if the world had ever heard of me, it would call me a Failure. But I'm the real Success, because I can do what everybody would like to do."

"What's that?"

"Live without working."

"I haven't the least desire to live without working, Mr. Brandon."

"No, because you're bitten by this terrible thing they call Ambition. You're not your own master; the world is your master, because Ambition has made you the slave of the world. All the people who work, whether from choice or necessity, are the slaves of the world."

"What will you do with your hundred pounds?"

"Go where the sun shines."

"And then?"

"That's all. Even the sun is a slave compared with me. I shall lie on my back on the sand, with the palm-trees behind me and the sea before me, and the sun will be my meat and drink, my clothes, my lodging, my wife, my children, and my friends. Good-by, Mister Success. Some day you may get over the effects of that bite, but I doubt it."

He went down the stairs and into the street, and Hannibal never saw him again.

Such were the effects of the boom in Hannibal's little paper on some of the people by whom he was surrounded. Now let us look more closely at the effect upon Hannibal himself.

We have seen him battling, for a brief space, against adversity. He battled successfully, but this is no guarantee that he would have gone on battling.

Some natures thrive and develop and expand under adversity; but others must have plenty

of the sunshine of success or they will wither and die.

Hannibal Quain came into the second class. The success of "You and I" lent him an almost superhuman vitality. Every fresh evidence of this success was another stream of life-blood poured into his being. It is a fact that he had never before felt so physically fit. He could work far into the night — long after all the members of his staff had betaken their weary bodies to home and bed — and yet be quite ready to begin again early in the morning.

His brain seethed with ideas. He took up publication after publication, all of them established successes before he appeared upon the scene, and found them heavy and behind the times. He may have been right, but it is only fair to say that many of these journals depended for their very existence on the fact that they were heavy and behind the times. Hannibal Quain would have slashed at them here and slashed at them there, and cut them down, and written them up, and lightened and brightened them to such an extent that the steady old bodies of subscribers would have been at first amazed, then shocked, and finally, with a heavy sigh, knocked their favorite journal off the list at their newsagent's. Hannibal Quain, we say, would have done all these things; Lord London knows better. He has

learned to respect the tastes and prejudices of the English Public, and he knows as well as anyone that the Public would rather ruin their eyesight over type to which they are accustomed than have their favorite journal printed in a clear but unfamiliar type. He knows that, while you can do what you like with a new publication, you must not tamper with the old.

Fortunately for Hannibal, he did not at this stage of his career begin buying up journals with established reputations. He preferred to create new journals, and his brain worked so quickly under the stimulus of appreciation by the public that he could quite easily have schemed out and organized and produced an entirely new paper each week. As it was, they came quickly enough, as everybody knows. He had soon covered the whole field of popular weekly journalism. He was the first man to realize that the Board Schools had brought a new and a tremendous public into existence; and he was not too proud to cater for that vast public. He understood them, he could see into their minds; and knew without listening or questioning or being told, exactly what they were thinking on any question of the day, or any phase of existence, or any of the ordinary affairs of life. So long as he followed this marvelous instinct, he could not make a mistake. He added to his staff every hour of the day; he was always

taking new offices; his fortune grew and multiplied so swiftly that he never knew how much he was really worth.

For the first few years, he was so busy building up his business that he had not time to realize his own power. It certainly did not come to him all at once that a man who could see right into the minds of the proletariat, and could express their thoughts on paper, and could stir their imaginations, and could win their confidence, must, in a country which was beginning to be governed very largely by the proletariat, eventually wield an almost incalculable power in that country.

The knowledge of this power came to him one day in a sort of blinding flash. He was reading a daily newspaper as he sat at breakfast, and he had steadily waded through two-thirds of a leader on a big human topic of the day. He was keenly interested in the topic, but he found his interest waning as he plowed his way through the leader. Suddenly putting down the paper, he said to Sheila:

“ I must have a daily paper.”

“ Why? ” asked Sheila. “ Haven’t you enough papers already? ”

“ Yes, enough weekly papers, but I can’t stand this sort of thing.”

He picked up the daily paper again, and opened it wide for her to see. Their eyes rested on an almost solid mass of small print. There was

hardly a break of any sort to relieve the terrible monotony of those columns and columns of small print. The very idea of reading from the top left-hand corner down to the bottom right-hand corner of the opposite page made one feel faint and giddy.

"I don't suppose you can," agreed Sheila.

"Can anyone?"

"I don't suppose so."

"But, then, why is it all printed?"

"I don't know. I never did think of a daily paper as a thing that people read."

"Then what's the use of it?"

"Oh, it just tells you if anything of importance has happened."

"But, my dear child, things of importance are always happening. Look out of the window! Look at the size of the world! Think of the thousands and thousands of square miles that make up the surface of the world, and think of the millions and millions of people moving about on those square miles! Do you really mean to tell me that there are not enough things happening every hour of the day to stuff a daily paper so full of interesting reading that you would never want to read anything else?"

"I suppose so, but I hope you won't bring out a daily paper that we shall all have to read, Han."

"Why not? Why shouldn't I?"

“ Because we should have no time to read novels.”

“ Oh, yes, you would. I shouldn't be so stupid as to expect people to read nothing but my daily paper, nor have I the least desire to interfere with the sales of my own weekly papers. But I do feel absolutely certain that if there were a daily paper which gave people the news brightly and pithily served up in a small space, and gave them just such news as they wanted, and left out all the things that they didn't want, and gave them, into the bargain, clever articles on special subjects written by the cleverest men of the day, and a leader which put their own ideas into a few simple but forcible words, and if that paper were sold at half the price of the ordinary daily paper as we have it at present — I do believe that that daily paper would very soon have a circulation of a million copies a day!

“ Now, just think what one could do if one had a daily paper of one's own with a circulation of a million copies a day! It would mean that one would have a bigger hold on the people of this country than any other man in the country. Suppose you wanted to bring about any reform — and you know as well as I do, that there are plenty of social reforms that ought to be brought about — by insisting in this paper upon the need for that reform, you would have your million readers — or five million readers — for at least five people

would read each copy — thinking about that reform, and what people think about they talk about, and what they talk about they begin to want, and, when you had five million people wanting something, those in authority would soon perceive that these five million people must either have what they want, or a very good reason must be given them for not having it!

“There is no Government in this country or any other that could afford to snap its fingers in the face of a man who had only to open his mouth to speak clearly and forcefully to five million people. At present, there are plenty of people ready to sneer at me because I bring out little weekly papers that are just meant to amuse and interest the masses. You know that well enough. But once let me have a daily paper of the kind I have described, and, if they continue to sneer, they’ll take care to get into a dark corner first and do it with their backs turned. It’s the greatest idea, Sheila, that I’ve struck as yet. Such a big idea that I shan’t attempt to tackle it at present. Before I tackle it, I must get the technique of the daily newspaper business at my fingers’ ends. We’ll keep it quite to ourselves, but I’m going to start looking into the matter this very day.”

“Will you never give yourself any rest, Han?”

“Rest? I wasn’t made to rest. Some people can rest; I can’t. If I tried to rest, I should at once begin to rust, and the man who rusts is done

for. I hate the very thought of rest. I want to go on, and on, and on, and there's no saying where I shall stop."

"You know that I wouldn't discourage you for worlds, but promise me one thing?"

"I'll promise you anything."

"Then promise me that, directly you begin to feel the slightest doubt about making a success of any new scheme, you'll come to me and tell me exactly what the scheme is and why you have doubts about it."

"Certainly I'll promise that."

"I don't say that I shall at once thoroughly understand the scheme, but I do think I understand you, and that is something toward it, isn't it?"

"It's a very great deal toward it. I value your sympathy and advice, dear, more than I value the help and advice of all the people in my employ put together, partly because you understand me so well, and partly because your advice is disinterested."

"Is it?" Sheila smiled.

"Well, isn't it?"

"No, you old duffer. If my advice is worth anything, it is because it's just the opposite of disinterested."

Hannibal jumped up, put his arms about her, and kissed her.

"This is developing into a philological discussion, and that's a luxury I mustn't indulge in when

all my young people in all their offices need looking after."

"Will you be in for lunch?"

"Not a chance."

"Tea?"

"I'm afraid not, dearest."

"Dinner?"

"Oh, yes, I hope so."

"Only hope?"

"Who's coming?"

"Nobody."

"Then *I* will. I wish we could cook sausages ourselves on the gas-stove!"

"Why shouldn't we? What fun!"

"Splendid! Let's ask dear old Hamm!"

"Would he come?"

"Make him! It's quite time he forgave me for paying back his old three thousand pounds."

"All right. I'll do my best to make him come."

"Then it's settled. He'll come. What time?"

"Cooking at seven — dinner at seven-thirty."

"I'll be here at seven. I wouldn't miss seeing dear old Hamm handling the frying-pan again for all the papers and offices in Fleet Street!"

XI

HANNIBAL AND HIS STAFF

THERE are two ways of getting through a dense wood; one is the way of the little man, and the other is the way of the big man. The little man twists and turns, wriggling beneath dangerous brambles, skirting round the more difficult clumps of undergrowth. Occasionally, he may even go upon his hands and knees rather than risk a scratch or a blow. His circuitous path may lead him into miry places, but he does not mind that, because dirt, after all, does not actually wound the flesh.

The big man's method is precisely the opposite. On account of his stature, it is an impossibility for him to creep and crawl and wriggle. He marches straight on, with his head well up, laying about him lustily with his staff as he goes. He may be torn with thorns, he may be struck in the face by resentful branches whose peace he has disturbed, he may find the journey harder to accomplish than the little man who is wriggling and squirming along at his feet; but for him there is no other way. Spectators of the struggle may call him a fool; they may applaud, by contrast, the methods

of the little man; but, in their hearts, they cannot help admitting that the big man presents a bolder, and a more admirable, and a more inspiring figure to the world.

Lord London's path through the forest of business life has always been the path of the big man. The way is clearer for him now, but, with the first rush of success, he found the tangle of undergrowth far thicker than he could have supposed possible. His direct method of progress was, in a great measure, responsible for this. You cannot march quickly through a forest without leaving a trail behind you, and he certainly left a considerable trail of bruised reeds and saplings behind him during those early stages of his career. They raised their heads after he had passed, and, as they gradually recovered from the shock, whispered hissing among themselves. They told the world around that here was a bad, a cruel, a vicious, and an unscrupulous man. They deliberately closed their eyes to all that was good in him. They saw no merit in the fact that, by the strength of his own arm, he had dragged his family from obscurity, and something very like poverty, and placed them on high and firm ground. They never told the world that they themselves had had their chance and missed it. They never told the world that they had been tried and found wanting. They preferred to tell the tale in quite other language, and the world, which finds it con-

venient to keep the standard of personal integrity fairly low, listened with greedy ears to these whisperers.

Hannibal, among many other innovations, was the first proprietor of papers in this country to take every man who applied to him at the applicant's own valuation. This was the usual procedure in the case of applicants for work on the editorial side of his business:

"You wish to join my staff?"

"Yes. I should like very much to join your staff."

"Why?"

"Oh, because I'm sure that I should make a great success as a journalist if only I could get a start."

"Have you had any experience?"

"Well, no, not exactly."

"Then what makes you think you would be a great success as a journalist?"

"Well, I've always been very fond of writing."

"We don't want writing in this office. We want to interest our readers. We don't want you to show how clever you are; we want to make them feel how clever they are. Do you think you can grasp that?"

"Oh, yes, I quite understand that."

"Very well. . . . Mr. Sandown, this young gentleman wishes to work for you. I have no

doubt you will be able to make him useful. He will start with a salary of four pounds a week. . . . Good morning, Mr. Meadowsweet. If you really have the makings of a journalist in you, Mr. Sandown will soon find them out. If not, he'll soon fire you out."

Away would go young Mr. Meadowsweet, hugging himself with delight. At one leap, he was a full-blown journalist. At one leap, he was drawing a larger salary than all those clever school-fellows of his who had passed Civil Service examinations, or gone into banks, or into other offices. He saw himself lounging in a chair, smoking unlimited cigarettes, reading manuscripts, and sitting as a judge on the efforts of others. He talked airily to his friends about Fleet Street, and they stared at him with the deepest admiration.

Mr. Sandown would begin by letting him down very lightly. He would give him some proofs to read, or a story to read, or send him out to get particulars of the number of frozen sheep landed at Tilbury during the month of April. In the course of a few days, Mr. Meadowsweet would be given something a little stiffer. A story eight thousand words in length would be pitched across to him, and he would be told that the idea was good, but the writing vile, and that the story was far too long. He would receive instructions to read the story carefully, and boil it down to fifteen hundred words. This would terrify him, and he

would give himself a week for the accomplishment of the terrible task. At the end of the next day, Mr. Sandown would ask him for the story, and he would confess that he had not yet begun to rewrite it. He would explain that he was letting the idea develop in his brain. Mr. Sandown would then and there make up his mind about Mr. Meadowsweet, but he would give him another chance because the Chief liked people to have at least a month's trial. Mr. Sandown thought this a terrible waste of time and money, but the Chief's word was law. So Mr. Meadowsweet would remain in the office for a month, doing nothing, getting in everybody's way, and drawing a salary of four pounds a week.

At the end of the month, Hannibal, who had an extraordinary memory for the most minute details, would suddenly send for Mr. Sandown and say to him:

"What about young Meadowsweet?"

"No good."

"Sure? His father's an advertiser, you know."

"Dead sure. He's about as much idea of journalism as the fireman."

"All right. Send him to me."

Mr. Meadowsweet, like King Agag of deathless memory, would come walking into the room delicately. What did this portend? He knew that the Chief had received a letter from his father that morning, asking that his son might be pro-

moted to rather higher-class work. Was he to be made Editor of "You and I"? Was he to be given control of the new monthly magazine which was being talked of in the office? Was he to be asked to write a serial story for "Rosemary," and, if so, would his name be placarded in huge type all over London and the Provinces? He did not feel that he had done much work at present, but everybody knew that the Chief had a genius for discovering genius in others. Yes, undoubtedly this summons to the Presence meant another huge bound upwards in his affairs.

"Good morning, Mr. Meadowsweet."

"Good morning, sir."

"I've had a letter this morning from your father, Mr. Meadowsweet. I gather from it that you are not altogether satisfied with your work."

"Well, sir, I should like to do something a little better."

"Quite so, Mr. Meadowsweet. You see, there isn't very much scope in my office for a man of your capabilities and ambitions. I could have told you that when you first came to me, but you wouldn't have believed it. You would have thought that I was unwilling to give you a trial. Now, although I knew that the work I could offer you was not exactly suited to your undoubted gifts for literature, I was nevertheless in a position to afford you an insight into the routine and technicalities of editorial work. Mr. Sandown tells me

that you have shown great interest in the work of his department, and that you have really learned in this short time as much as he can teach you. That being the case, I advise you, Mr. Meadowsweet, to lose no time in getting to work on the class of paper to which your talents must inevitably lead you." Here Hannibal would rise and graciously extend his hand. "It has been a great pleasure to me, Mr. Meadowsweet, to have you in my office, and I shall always be pleased to hear of your doing well. Give my kind regards to your father. Good-by."

Mr. Meadowsweet would withdraw from the Presence in a kind of beautiful glow. The fact that he had been praised, and highly praised, by the great Hannibal Quain would, for a time, put his intelligence out of working order. But, presently, he would begin to perceive dimly that he had been sacked. That suspicion would gradually crystallize into conviction, thanks to the little note from the cashier enclosing a week's salary, and the entirely cordial and kindly manner of the busy Mr. Sandown.

On reaching home that night, he would recount the details of the interview with Hannibal to his father, who would call Hannibal a great many ugly names, and threaten to withdraw his advertisements from Hannibal's journals. For the next few days, both father and son would go to and fro explaining to the world at large that Han-

nibal Quain was a heartless monster, and a base wretch, and a low deceiver. The world, especially the world of journalism, would hear these things gladly, but, for all that, the world of journalism would not make a mad dash for the services of young Mr. Meadowsweet. He would find it extremely difficult, and probably altogether impossible, to get anybody else to give him as good a chance as Hannibal had given him, and he would end by going into his father's business and bullying small clerks earning small money for hard work, or would be shipped off to the Colonies to impress his individuality on skeptical Colonials. The skeptical Colonials would take a violent fancy to young Mr. Meadowsweet while his capital lasted, and sit at bars with him helping him to curse Hannibal Quain. When his capital was gone, they would explain to him that Hannibal Quain, at any rate, could turn a halfpenny into a penny, and a penny into sixpence. When young Mr. Meadowsweet could prove his ability to do that, he would have every right to call Hannibal Quain a fool and a blackguard for having taken him at his own valuation and given him his first opportunity in life.

That is one picture of Hannibal in his office. Now take another picture, necessarily rarer, and, therefore, swamped by the number of less pleasing pictures.

Mr. Sandown entered Hannibal's service at the

age of fifteen. His appearance was not beautiful — a thin, pale, rather undersized lad of London town. He had no literary pretensions; he was engaged, chiefly, to lick envelopes. He first came under Hannibal's notice by getting a piece of information on underground London. Hannibal had walked one afternoon into the editorial room of "You and I," and complained that there were not enough short, pithy paragraphs of general interest in the current issue. The Editor — for Hannibal had long since been compelled to hand over the care of his firstling to another — had replied that this was true, the reason being that such paragraphs were exceedingly difficult to obtain.

"Nonsense," replied Hannibal, abruptly. "Put this down."

He walked across to the window, looked into the street, and saw a man emerging from a manhole in the opposite pavement. He at once began dictating a brief paragraph on the life of the underground workers in London. He proceeded fluently for a time, and then hesitated as to the amount of wages earned by these men. The Editor could not enlighten him, but a pale youth, who was busily licking envelopes in the corner, rose from his chair, put his finger to his forehead, and suggested that he should run down into the street, follow the man who had just come up from the manhole, and get the information.

Hannibal agreed, and the youth was out of the room like a flash.

“What’s that boy’s name?” asked Hannibal.

“Sandown.”

“How long has he been here?”

“About six months.”

“Good worker?”

“Quite good.”

“Punctual?”

“Very.”

“Honest?”

“Quite.”

“And obviously intelligent. Give him something better to do, and let me have a copy of the paper each week with his stuff marked. You needn’t let him know that I’m watching him.”

The boy came back in less than ten minutes with the particulars required for Hannibal’s paragraph, and they were duly printed. In three months’ time, Sandown, the envelope-licker, was Mr. Sandown, Sub-Editor of “You and I.” Six months later, he was the Editor of “You and I,” having taken the place of the gentleman who found a difficulty in obtaining pithy and interesting paragraphs. Two years later, Mr. Sandown had five publications under his control. When these publications, together with the other weekly publications owned by Hannibal, were converted into a limited company, Mr. Sandown became a director with five

thousand shares to his credit, and a fixed salary of fifteen-hundred a year.

That is the other side of the picture.

XII

CLEMENT JEAKES

AMONG the many clever men who are always watching for the Great Chance in Fleet Street, there was one, about this time, called Mr. Clement Jeakes. Mr. Jeakes came originally from Dundee. Like many another shrewd Scotsman, young Clement Jeakes had, very early in life, grasped the fact that the farther south you went the easier it was to impress your personality on your fellow human beings. It was difficult, Jeakes found, to make any particular impression on the young gentlemen of Dundee. Their habits of thought being the same, and their training being the same, and the air that they breathed being the same, they knew what Jeakes was going to say before he said it, which discounted the witticisms of Jeakes. If Jeakes played cards with them, they were just as likely to win as Jeakes, which may have lent excitement to the game, but was, on the other hand, a waste of time for a young man who had made up his mind to be rich by the age of forty.

So Jeakes moved down to Edinburgh. There was a scholarly, refined atmosphere about Edin-

burgh which appealed to him. Nobody had very much money in Edinburgh, but, at the same time, nobody appeared desperately anxious to make very much money. Jeakes had a theory that the world was divided into two classes — those who make money, and those who merely spend it. He argued, therefore, that if a young man who wanted to make money went to and fro among people who were merely spending money, the odds were that the young man's desire would be fulfilled. So he went to Edinburgh.

He received, in Edinburgh, one of the first useful lessons of his life. He discovered that his theory was not sound. He discovered that there is a third class of person, namely, people who neither make money, nor spend money, but keep money. Jeakes remained six months in Edinburgh; that was long enough to show him that the Edinburgh people were quite determined to keep what money they had.

Jeakes then went farther south — as far as Manchester. He had received some training in Dundee, and again in Edinburgh, as a journalist; in Manchester he joined the staff of a well-known daily paper, and was set, after a time, to write up little incidents of the street life of Manchester. This showed cleverness on the part of the editor, for the street life of a great city was precisely the life that Jeakes understood and loved. He was one of those miraculous young men who are in

touch with the gossip of every corner of the town. He soon got to know, in a miraculous way, which publican was going bankrupt, and which barmaid was about to run off with which prominent draper, and which local billiard-champion was the safest to back for the forthcoming tournament, and why a certain hotel had fallen into disfavor with the Watch Committee.

Clement Jeakes, as is also the way of this type of young man, soon became a well-known figure about Manchester. If he walked into a bar, there were always three or four people to turn round and greet him with "Hello, Clement!" and to press him to drink with them. The golden-haired young lady behind the bar would nod pleasantly, and call him "Clement," and put just the right amount of soda into his whisky without having to ask him how much he wanted. This happened everywhere, and young Jeakes might have consumed fifty drinks at the expense of other people any night of his life. But he was far too clever for that. He was so clever, indeed, that he could refuse forty-six drinks out of the fifty without offending anybody.

Jeakes could walk into any theater at the mere price of a nod to the man at the door, and it was just the same at the music-halls. But he was at his best, probably, when the local races came on. For a week before the races, Jeakes was in tremendous request. He had that subtle, inexplica-

ble trick of appearing to impart information about a horse without actually committing himself. Nobody wondered how it was that Jeakes should always have special information about horses; they just took the special information for granted. If a man had taken a violent fancy to a horse, he would lead Jeakes aside, and question him, in strictest secrecy, about that horse. Jeakes never discouraged a man with a violent fancy. If the horse won, that man was ready to do anything for Jeakes; Jeakes was great; Jeakes was a marvel; Jeakes was the nicest, and the cleverest, and the best fellow round town. On the other hand, if the horse lost, the man could not positively swear that Jeakes had advised him to back it. Indeed, when he came to search his memory, he rather fancied that he ought to have taken warning from a certain look in the eye of Jeakes. Jeakes, then, had known all along that the horse would lose, so that, either way, Jeakes remained a marvel.

When he had been serving up his popular little paragraphs for about twelve months, Jeakes went to his editor and politely asked for an increase of salary.

"What are you getting now, Mr. Jeakes?" asked the editor.

"Three-ten," replied Jeakes.

"And what do you want?"

"Six."

"Six pounds a week?" gasped the editor.

“ Yes. And I’m worth it.”

“ And suppose I can’t see my way to such a large increase, Mr. Jeakes? ”

“ Then I’ll have to be moving on,” said Jeakes.

The editor referred the matter to his proprietor, who, knowing little or nothing of Jeakes, since his interest in the paper was confined to the portion that had least to do with the selling of it, namely, the leader, and being quite unaccustomed to such sudden jumps in his salary-list, told the editor that Jeakes must be content with four pounds a week or leave.

Jeakes left, and, still progressing upwards, went still farther south until he came to Birmingham. Strange to relate, Jeakes’s chatty little column was known in Birmingham. This surprised Jeakes, but he was careful not to show surprise. He demanded his six pounds from the editor who was foolish enough to volunteer the information that he had heard of Jeakes, and got five. Jeakes went to work with a will, quickly apprehended the differences between the Manchester man-about-town and the Birmingham man-about-town, and repeated his success. In three months, the private lives of the prominent citizens of Birmingham were an open secret to Jeakes. Once again he found himself hailed in the principal bars, and smiled upon by golden-haired barmaids, and drawn into quiet corners and consulted as to the chances of a certain horse in a certain race. And Birming-

ham had the advantage over Manchester that Manchester had had over Dundee; with each stage of the journey southwards, Jeakes found that people were easier to handle, and he also found, as we have seen, that he made more money.

Obviously, therefore, Jeakes was only waiting for the opportunity to break into London, and this came about through a chance meeting with the editor of a London halfpenny evening paper who was paying a visit to Birmingham in his capacity as an honored member of the Institute of Journalists. This paper was called the "Planet," and was well-known to Jeakes as giving the best sporting tips of any paper in the British Isles. A smart man was wanted to do smart notes on town topics, and Jeakes got the job at a salary of six pounds a week. He was a little disappointed in the salary, but he had broken into London, and London was full of possibilities to a man with the brains, to which he had now added experience, of Clement Jeakes.

Jeakes, as we have said, was determined to be a rich man by the age of forty, and he saw quite clearly that he would never be a rich man so long as he remained a working journalist. The race-course, while it proves a Slough of Despond to young men of weak character, often inspires young men of stronger character to attempt great things. They see before their eyes all the evidences of wealth. Men are pointed out to them who have

started life with nothing and have amassed huge fortunes. All the talk is of money, and the evidences of what money can buy are flaunted before their eyes. Jeakes, as he looked hungrily at the portly millionaires strolling to and fro in the most expensive enclosure, huge cigars in their mouths, huge golden chains across their waistcoats, pockets, no doubt, stuffed with bank notes, swore to be even such an one or know the reason why. There was nothing to stop him. He had brains, he had a knowledge of men and things, he was energetic, he had health, and he had pluck. The one thing that he now wanted was the Great Chance.

One of the men most envied and admired by Jeakes in these days was Hannibal Quain. He had heard all about Hannibal, of course, long before he came to London; he knew that Hannibal was about the same age as himself, that he had started much as Jeakes had started, and that he was now a very rich man. Jeakes set himself the task of getting to know what Hannibal's next ambition was likely to be; once get to know that, and find the means of gratifying it, and he could attach his small boat to this big one, and float down the stream at the same pace.

On a certain afternoon, just as Hannibal had returned from lunch, a card was brought in to him. It bore the name of Mr. Clement Jeakes, the name of the "Planet," and the words, "Important business" written with a pen. Hannibal liked to see

newspaper-men; he liked to get to know them, and he liked them to get to know him. He liked them to see that he was a very human sort of person, despite the stories that were told of his harshness, and, being a very human sort of person, he probably liked them to discover for themselves how young he was, and how clever he was, and what a perfect office he possessed, and by what a finely-trained staff he was surrounded.

Mr. Jeakes, after being kept waiting a sufficient time to inspire him with the necessary degree of awe — if he was capable of being inspired with awe, which he wasn't — was shown into the Presence. He saw, standing behind a large and handsome desk, a young man, clean-shaven, fresh-complexioned, with a long fair fringe brushed slant-wise across his forehead. It was a relief to him to know that Hannibal Quain looked exactly like his portraits in the papers; so many public men were disappointing in that respect.

“Good-day, Mr. Jeakes,” said Hannibal, affably. It was one of his little habits to speak to strangers as though he had known them quite well for at least ten years.

Mr. Jeakes advanced and shook hands. He also had a charm of his own, and he knew it. Both these men, who were destined to do great things together, relied to a large extent upon their personalities. Hannibal's was now a commanding personality; he was good at close quarters, better

still behind a desk or at the end of a long table, but best of all in the chair at a big public dinner. He had it in him to rule a crowd. Mr. Jeakes, on the other hand, was not at his best with a crowd. The charm of his personality made itself better felt across a small table at lunch, or smoking a cigar over the fire, or in the privacy of his own office.

"Glad to meet you, Mr. Quain. You have been one of my idols ever since I took to journalism."

"When was that?" asked Hannibal, quickly.

"About ten years ago," replied Mr. Jeakes.

Hannibal waved gracefully to a chair, and they both sat down. Hannibal had taken a fancy to Mr. Jeakes. He had seen at once that here was a shrewd fellow — shrewd above the average. He did not feel that he had quite taken Mr. Jeakes's measure, but he felt little doubt that he would take it. Hannibal was never afraid of people's being too clever; he was very much afraid of their being too stupid.

"You wish to see me on a matter of business, Mr. Jeakes?"

"Yes. I have an option on a paper with great possibilities in it, and I thought you might like to take up my option."

"What paper is it?"

"'The Evening.'"

"I don't publish daily papers."

"No, but you will, Mr. Quain," said Jeakes.

The quiet assurance of the tone rather surprised Hannibal.

"Why shall I?"

"Because you were born to do it."

"My hands are very full already."

"I know that. It's because your hands are so full, Mr. Quain, that I've come to you with this option. I don't want to take it to a one-string man. I know your one-string men; they can't grasp more than one idea at a time. You've got both your hands full of strings, but the strings are all in order, and you can easily shift them all into your left hand, and take up this new string with your right. It'll want a bit of pulling, but that's where the fun comes in."

"When does your option on the 'Evening' expire, Mr. Jeakes?"

"The day after to-morrow."

"That's not giving me very long to consider the matter."

"If I may say so, Mr. Quain, you don't need a long time to consider it. From what I've observed of your methods, you're not the man to hesitate, and shilly-shally, and potter about like an old hen. I guess you know now whether you want the 'Evening' or whether you don't want it."

"You're quite right, Mr. Jeakes. I don't want it."

Mr. Jeakes rose and reached for his hat. "I'm sorry," he said, with a mournful look at Hannibal.

"Why are you sorry?" asked Hannibal, without rising.

"Because the 'Evening' is going to have the biggest circulation of any evening paper in London. It's going to knock the 'Planet' into a cocked hat. That's why I'm sorry, Mr. Quain."

"And who will work this astounding change in the fortunes of the 'Evening,' Mr. Jeakes?"

"I shall."

"You?"

"Yes."

"Don't be in a hurry, Mr. Jeakes. Sit down again."

Mr. Jeakes sat down again.

"Tell me," continued Hannibal, "how you will make such an enormous success of this paper."

"That's a pretty cool suggestion," said Mr. Jeakes, "but I'll comply with it because I'm not afraid of your stealing my ideas."

"Thank you," said Hannibal, simply.

"Oh," explained Clement Jeakes candidly, "I'm not prepared to say that you wouldn't steal them if you could. I don't know you well enough, Mr. Quain, to have as much confidence in you as all that, and my experience teaches me that nine men out of every ten in this business — and that's taking a pretty low average — will steal any idea

that they can lay their hands on. You may be the hundredth man, Mr. Quain; I shall soon find out whether you are or not.

“ But the reason why I said I wasn’t afraid of your stealing my ideas was simply because I don’t believe that you, or any other man in Fleet Street, could handle the ‘ Evening ’ the way I mean to handle it. There are lots of clever men in Fleet Street, but those who have had the training haven’t got the enterprise, and those who have got the enterprise haven’t got the brains. It so happens that I’ve got all three — training, enterprise, and brains.

“ I shall make the ‘ Evening,’ to begin with, a human paper. There will be nothing in the human line beneath our notice. We shall range from the latest speech of the Prime Minister to the domestic servant’s hat. We shall be the first to discover the whereabouts of a murderer in hiding, we shall give the fullest reports of society divorce cases, and we shall also print the finest poetry by the most human poets of the day.

“ I intend to remodel the organization for distribution. You will not only find the ‘ Evening ’ first on the streets with any big piece of news, but you will find the early editions, which will contain as much interesting matter as an ordinary weekly paper, as far south as Portsmouth, and as far north as Leicester.

“And even now, Mr. Quain, I have not shown you my trump card.”

“You interest me very much, Mr. Jeakes. What is your trump card?”

“I’ll give you three guesses,” said Clement Jeakes, leaning back happily in his chair and smiling at Hannibal.

“I never guess.”

“Pardon me, you’re guessing as hard as you can inside your head at this moment. None of the things I’ve mentioned up to the present, Mr. Quain, will sell an evening paper worth a cent — not even the first news of a big murder mystery. Shall I tell you what sells halfpenny evening papers? Betting tips, Mr. Quain.”

“D’you really mean that?”

“I do. Take the ‘Planet.’ There are lots of clever men writing for the ‘Planet.’ We’ve got the cleverest dramatic critic in London, and we’ve got the best head-liner, and we’ve got the best police-court reporter, and we’ve got the best man for writing up town topics.”

“That’s yourself, Mr. Jeakes, I believe.”

“It is. But it isn’t the dramatic critic who sells the paper, or the head-liner, or the police-court reporter, or me; and it isn’t the whole lot of us combined. The man who sells the paper is the man who gives the tips for the day’s racing, and his tips sell the paper because he is more often right than anybody else, so that he has gained

the confidence of the man in the street, and the man in the street follows him. I suppose you don't realize, Mr. Quain, what racing means to the man in the street? "

" I certainly didn't realize that it meant as much as all that."

" Do you do any racing yourself? "

" Never."

" Never been to a race-meeting in your life? "

" Yes, I've been to the Derby, and I've been to Ascot, and Goodwood."

" Just the ordinary social functions," observed Clement Jeakes, with no little scorn. " I thought as much. And yet I suppose you would say that you thoroughly understand the man in the street! "

" I should have said so ten minutes ago, but I see now that I don't. I think I understand a great many sections of society, but it has been left to you, Mr. Jeakes, to show me one section that I don't understand."

" Well, then, seeing that the man in the street is the chief purchaser of the halfpenny evening paper, I don't think you could very well make a success of the 'Evening,' Mr. Quain, without my help."

" Perhaps not, but I haven't bought it yet."

" You're going to buy it."

" Am I? "

" Certainly. I can see it in your face."

" That's very clever of you, Mr. Jeakes."

“ Yes, I am very clever.”

Hannibal suddenly remembered that he had made use of just such a retort at a certain critical moment in his own career, and his heart warmed toward Mr. Jeakes. We have seen that he had made up his mind, some little time before this, to have a daily paper of his own. He had never relinquished the idea, and had been steadily getting together as much information as he could with regard to daily newspapers. True, his thoughts and tastes lay rather in the direction of morning papers than evening papers, but a daily was a daily, and he would learn more in six months from running the ‘ Evening ’ than he would learn in ten years from asking questions. Even supposing that he lost a few thousands over it, he was making money so quickly that that would not matter, and he had no objection to buying his experience at a reasonable price.

He looked across his desk at Clement Jeakes. He saw before him a hard-headed, clean-shaven, shrewd, clever little Scotsman, with no illusions, no “ frills,” no airs and graces; a man who badly wanted his chance in life, and who would work himself to the bone to make a success of it if he got it. Jeakes had already said enough for Hannibal to see that he had the makings of a very successful editor in him; if he could so arrange with Jeakes that it was to the interest of Jeakes to stand by his paper through thick and thin, Han-

nibal felt that the 'Evening' might become the success that Jeakes anticipated.

"What do you want for your option, Mr. Jeakes?"

Mr. Jeakes named a considerable sum. Hannibal did not wince.

"And what do you want for yourself?"

"Twenty pounds a week," replied Jeakes, "until we begin to show a profit. After that, a share of the profits on a sliding scale."

They went into the matter of the sliding scale, and Hannibal made some notes on a piece of paper. It was quite clear that, if the "Evening" did become a very big success, Mr. Jeakes stood to make a considerable amount of money, but Hannibal was never greedy, which is one of the reasons for his fantastic success. As we have seen in the case of Mr. Sandown, he was always willing to work on the profit-sharing system, nor could he understand how any employer could be so blind to his own interests as to refuse to work on this basis. He had proved that the man who is willing to take a fairly large salary, with no prospects of increasing it by divisional profits, does about a quarter of the work of the man who is willing to take a smaller salary with the hope of a fair share in the results of his labors.

The next morning, Hannibal had before him the various books giving the details of the circulation of the "Evening," and the advertisement revenue,

and the cost of running. He had with him his chief accountant, and his secretary, and, of course, Hasdrubal. Within twenty-four hours from the time that Mr. Clement Jeakes sent in his card, it was known in Fleet Street that Hannibal Quain had bought the "Evening," and that Clement Jeakes was to be the new editor, with a handsome salary and a share of the profits.

Hannibal dined at home that night. During the course of dinner, he mentioned to Sheila — they had no guests — that, for the first time in his life, he had bought a paper.

"What paper?" asked Sheila.

"A paper called the 'Evening,' my dear."

"What's that? I never heard of it."

"You will," said Hannibal. "Just wait until Jeakes gets to work."

"Who in the world is Jeakes?"

"Oh, he's the man who will edit it. You'll meet him to-morrow. I'm bringing him home to dinner."

And that was how Clement Jeakes realized *his* ambition.

XIII

THE "LITTLE DAILY"

THE enormous success of the "Evening" — for Clement Jeakes was as good as his word — led quite naturally to the realization of Hannibal's greatest scheme up to the present, namely, the establishment of a morning daily newspaper. When it became known in Fleet Street that Hannibal Quain was preparing to launch upon the British Isles a daily morning paper at the price of a halfpenny, everybody thought that the young man had at last taken leave of his senses. As a matter of fact, there was a halfpenny morning newspaper already in existence, but the sale of that little sheet was so small that experienced journalists had assured each other of the impossibility of making a morning paper pay at the price. Indeed, they could see no room for any new morning daily paper of any kind, forgetting that every morning newspaper already in existence had been received with just such doubtful waggings of the head.

There were, of course, very real difficulties in Hannibal's way. For the small sum of one half-

penny, he could not possibly give the public a newspaper even approaching the size of the penny morning papers; the cost of paper alone prohibited that. If, then, he cut down his paper to one-half the size of the penny papers, how was he to leave himself enough space, apart from editorial matter, to include sufficient advertisements to make the paper a financial success? That was one enormous obstacle. Hannibal, as we now know, solved it by printing the essence of the news of the day instead of the full reports printed by the penny papers, and by keeping his literary matter, such as dramatic criticisms and book reviews down to the smallest possible limits; he then placed a price upon his spaces for advertisements that could be justified only by a very large circulation.

It now remained to secure that circulation. How was it to be done? Lord London himself declares that the "Little Daily" leaped into almost instant popularity because he gave the public for one halfpenny exactly the same paper that the other dailies were giving them for threepence, twopence, and a penny. We think ourselves that he overlooks one very important asset contributing to his success, namely, the woman reader.

Until the appearance of the "Little Daily," the women of England had looked upon the daily newspaper as a thing which was useful when you wanted to find a servant, or when you wanted to

line the bottom of a drawer. Apart from these functions, it was rather a nuisance, often being the cause of bad temper on the part of their husbands, or, when the husbands were in a good temper, encouraging them to inflict boring extracts upon the remainder of the household. But, when they took up the early numbers of the "Little Daily," they discovered, to their amazement, that they were actually deriving interest and even enjoyment from a daily newspaper. This gave them thrills of pride. It made one feel so superior to sit down in the afternoon with the daily paper, even though one might only read the *feuilleton*. Quite apart from the *feuilleton*, however, they discovered a number of interesting little paragraphs, eight or ten lines in length, which were easy to read and proved to be unusually full of fascination.

They found, every day, a page called the Magazine Page, which told them how to make dainty little dishes out of nothing, and how to make beautiful dresses for almost nothing, and how to preserve the complexion, together with much interesting information on the doings of famous actresses and the members of the aristocracy.

And the husbands, too, found things to read in the "Little Daily" that they had not found in their ordinary daily paper. They found, in particular, signed articles, on the same page as the leader, by some of the most brilliant writers of

the day. The particular favorite among these writers was a man whose name is still remembered with loving admiration, not only by the public, but also by literary men and journalists, who recognized in him a descriptive genius such as seldom finds his way into Fleet Street.

Whatever subject he chose to write about, this delightful artist endowed with the magic of his phrases and the melody of the purest prose, until the words leaped out from the paper and printed themselves on the brains and in the hearts of his readers.

Hannibal would be the first to admit the debt that he owed to this special writer, who actually died, all too young, in the service of his paper. When the Boer War broke out, he begged to be sent to the front. Hannibal knew well enough that the result would be a series of war articles such as no English newspaper had yet been privileged to publish; he also knew that the health of the man was not too good, and he therefore refused to send him to Africa. But the writer begged and begged again, until, at last, he had his way. Unhappily, he was stricken down with fever in beleaguered Ladysmith, and died in the arms of an artist friend with a phrase on his lips which, in its simple lucidity, was typical of his literary style; the phrase was, "It's a sideways ending to it all."

The reader must pardon this little digression,

for any history, however modest, of the foundation of the "Little Daily" would be incomplete unless it contained a sincere and admiring tribute to the man who still remains the finest descriptive writer that ever worked for Hannibal's paper.

Hannibal, during these stirring days that preceded the publication of the first number, never drank, rarely ate, and slept but seldom. For almost a month, Sheila hardly set eyes on him. In order to save time, he had a bed made up in the office, and, like his great namesake, would snatch an hour of sleep whenever a convenient opportunity presented itself. For a whole month before publication, the paper was written and printed in full every night, just as it would appear when launched upon the public.

Hannibal's hand was everywhere, sometimes touching up headlines, or the fashion notes, or the police-court reports, or the leader, or the criticisms, but, for the most part, cutting down, cutting down, cutting down. This was the lesson that he found the hardest to teach to his staff — the absolute necessity of boiling down every paragraph to its smallest possible limit. Reporters who had been accustomed to their column or half column of small close type, scratched their heads and gazed in bewilderment at their "stuff" when they saw it in the paper. The gentleman who wrote the Parliamentary sketch, the best obtainable, found himself compelled to cut out the ma-

jority of those flowing hyperboles for which he was famous. The leader-writer protested, almost with tears in his eyes, that he could not do himself justice in a meager four hundred words.

"I don't want you to do yourself justice," said Hannibal. "I want you to do me justice."

"But I can't do you justice, sir, if I haven't room to turn round in."

"I don't want you to turn round. Your front view is quite sufficient."

"But am I not to make my leader as effective as possible?"

"Certainly."

"Then you really must allow me more space. I've been a leader-writer for ten years, and —"

"That's just the trouble," said Hannibal, calmly. "I ought to have engaged a leader-writer who had never written a leader before in his life."

"Of course, sir, if you're dissatisfied with my services —"

"Don't be silly. Just take this down, Miss Bach."

He thereupon dictated, without pausing for one instant, a leader four hundred words in length, which contained every point made by the experienced leader-writer and was far easier to read.

"That's what I want," said Hannibal.

"Oh, very well," was the reply. But the leader-writer found that it took him nearly six

months to get all his points into so small a space. He used to marvel that Hannibal should pay him such a handsome salary for such a very small amount of work. He did not realize, and the other members of the staff did not realize, that Hannibal was not paying him for what he wrote, but for what he left out. This was one of the hardest pills for Fleet Street to swallow. They had become so accustomed to being paid, more or less, according to the space they filled in the paper, that it seemed absolute madness to pay a man double the salary for *not* filling space. Those who tumbled to the idea quickest, kept their berths; the others, like Mr. Meadowsweet, went away with their hearts full of bitterness.

Nothing annoyed Hannibal so much, in those strenuous days, as to be told that anything he wanted was impossible.

“Nothing is impossible,” he used to say, “to the man who is really determined. I don’t ask you to go beyond the limits of human capability; I don’t ask you to make a journey to Mars and bring back a descriptive account of the life led by the people on Mars, although I have no doubt that we shall print such a description in the ‘Little Daily’ long before people expect it. But there’s nothing on this planet beyond the reach of the journalist who has sufficient enterprise, confidence in himself, and an editor behind him who is prepared to back him with his authority and unlimited

expenses. Whatever happens on the surface of the globe that is of interest to the reading public must be written up in my paper; every man or woman of interest to the public must be described and interviewed for my paper. You tell me, for example, that there are certain people who refuse to be interviewed. Let them refuse. The very fact that they are known to have refused interviews to every other paper will make our interview the more valuable."

Shortly after this pronouncement had fallen from Hannibal's lips, the great Austin Lockett arrived in London. Austin Lockett was famous the world over as the man who had done more to advance British interests in Cape Colony than any other man living. He was, as everybody admitted, the uncrowned King of the Cape. Much as he had done, however, he made no secret of the fact that the ambition of his life was to see the whole map of Africa painted pink. A great portion of it, thanks largely to his endeavors, had already been painted pink; Austin Lockett was, therefore, a man after Hannibal's own heart.

As soon as he heard that Austin Lockett was on his way to London, Hannibal dispatched one of his cleverest writers to Madeira, with strict injunctions to travel from Madeira to Southampton by the same boat as Lockett, and to secure an interview with him at all costs. The man went, but returned empty-handed. Hannibal was furi-

ous. He would listen to no excuses, no explanations. He informed the wretched journalist that a man who could travel for several days on a steamship with another man, and yet could not persuade him to say something for publication, was quite out of place in his office. He did not dismiss him, because he realized that Luckett was an exceptionally tough subject, but the journalist waited long for an increase of salary that would have come with both hands had he been successful.

Hannibal then set another man — also one of his very best — to catch Luckett at his hotel. He instructed him to spare neither time, pains, nor money. The “Little Daily” was still in the precarious state of infancy, and Hannibal realized that the infant must evince some sign of precocity unless it wished to be smothered by its elder brothers.

The second representative devoted three days to the task of endeavoring to buttonhole the great Austin Luckett. At the end of that time, he returned to the office, pale, dispirited, and quite anxious to avoid a personal interview with Hannibal. Hannibal, however, was not to be balked.

“What did you do?” he asked.

“I did everything.”

“Except interview Luckett.”

“Yes. I don’t believe there’s a journalist living who could squeeze an interview out of Austin Luckett.”

"Yes, there is," said Hannibal.

"I should be very glad to know his name," retorted the luckless one.

"You shall. His name is Hannibal Quain."

Hannibal noted the smile of satisfaction that stole over the face of the man opposite him. He knew that it would soon be all over the office, and, for the matter of that, all over Fleet Street, that Hannibal Quain had determined to interview Austin Lockett himself. Well, he had let himself in for it, and he must not fail. If he did, he would never again be able to enforce his maxim that a journalist should be able to do anything that there was to be done on this planet. He had not the slightest idea how to get at Austin Lockett; he knew no friends of Lockett's, for Lockett seemed to have no friends in this country; he must just take his chance like any ordinary interviewer.

Hannibal decided to give himself one clear day for the business. He knew that Lockett was a very early riser, for the great South African might be seen riding in the Row any morning at seven o'clock. Hannibal, therefore, rose at five, and at six o'clock entered the hotel in Piccadilly at which Austin Lockett always stayed when on a visit to London. The sleepy night-porter, who was just going off duty, asked him his business.

"I want a suite of apartments," said Hannibal.

The night-porter fell back a pace, and touched his cap.

“ My luggage,” explained Hannibal, “ will be here directly. My man is bringing it off the boat train from Plymouth. What suites have you? ”

The night-porter was quite accustomed to people arriving and asking for rooms at all hours of the night, especially visitors who had arrived by boat from America or South Africa. He stepped into the office, there being no clerks on duty at this early hour, and ran his finger down the ledger.

“ We’ve a suite on the third floor, sir — sitting-room, bedroom, and bath-room.”

“ Is that the best suite in the hotel? ” demanded Hannibal.

“ No, sir, not quite the best suite. We’ve Mr. Austin Luckett staying here, and he always has the best suite.”

“ That’s a beastly nuisance! I don’t like the third floor — too high up. When I come to London, I like to forget all about sky-scrapers. Haven’t you anything on the same floor as the best suite? ”

“ Yes, sir. We’ve a nice bedroom on the second floor which is alongside the best suite. Would you like to see it? ”

“ Yes, I’ll see that. Send my luggage up directly it comes, will you? ” He slipped a sovereign into the hand of the night-porter, who was so gratified by this gentlemanly behavior that he omitted, for the time being, the trifling ceremony of asking Hannibal to register his name.

Hannibal was escorted upstairs by an equally sleepy waiter, who bowed him into his room, inquired whether he wished for anything at the moment, and then retired. Hannibal was now separated from his prey merely by the thickness of an hotel wall. So far as the thickness of the wall went, it might just as well have been made of steel, but the corridor was deserted, and the door of Mr. Lockett's suite was not nearly so thick as the wall.

Hannibal, as soon as the yawning waiter had retired, opened his door and looked into the corridor. Not a soul was stirring in the corridor, but from the other side of Mr. Lockett's door came the rumbling noise of a deep bass voice. Presently the voice ceased to rumble, and was answered by a light baritone. That, no doubt, was the voice of Mr. Lockett's valet. Mr. Lockett spoke again shortly and sharply, and then came the noise of a heavy splash. Mr. Lockett, presumably, was now in his bath.

Hannibal still waited in the doorway of his bedroom, wondering whether he should knock at Mr. Lockett's door and endeavor to gain admittance on pretense of borrowing a stud. The ruse was very feeble, he knew, but he could think of nothing better at the moment. He had practically decided to act upon it, when the door of Mr. Lockett's room suddenly opened, and the valet came out, closing the door behind him. He

glanced suspiciously at Hannibal, who, quick as lightning, beckoned to him. The man cautiously approached.

"Say," said Hannibal, with as near an imitation of Mr. Hamm's accent as he could manage on the spur of the moment, "are you going downtown?"

"No," said the man.

"Well, that's a pity," said Hannibal, taking care not to raise his voice, although the splashing in Mr. Lockett's room would have prevented that eminent statesman from overhearing any dialogue in the corridor. "I have a most important cable that I wish sent off from the cable-office down at Charing Cross, and the staff of this hotel don't inspire me with confidence. If you could spare the time to jump into a cab and dispatch this cable for me, it would be worth a five-pound-note to you, and you could be back almost as soon as your master is out of his bath."

As he was speaking, Hannibal gradually retreated into his room, and the valet, lured on by the mention of the five-pound-note, followed.

"For the matter of that," said the valet, "I don't ever stop with him when he's dressing. I just put all his things ready, and then I take the dog for a walk in the park. He likes to see the dog there when he's riding."

Hannibal might have saved his five-pound-note had he known that the valet would not be returning

to Mr. Lockett's rooms for an hour or so, but he did not grudge the money. The information was cheap at the price.

"Well," he said, "if you could just manage to leave this cablegram for me at Charing Cross, I should be very greatly obliged, and you could still be in the park by the time your master arrives there. Isn't that so?"

"Certainly, sir," agreed the valet.

Hannibal sat down at a small table on which lay the usual writing materials. He hastily scribbled an imaginary address, filled in the message in an imaginary code, and handed the paper to the valet, together with a couple of sovereigns for the message and the promised five-pound-note. The valet, highly delighted with his luck, disappeared down the corridor. Mr. Austin Lockett was now at Hannibal's mercy.

Hannibal once again slipped into the corridor, made quite sure that there was nobody stirring, and then laid his hand on the handle of Mr. Lockett's door. The door yielded, and Hannibal entered, softly closing the door behind him. He found himself in a small entrance-hall; a door on his left led into the bedroom, the sitting-room being beyond the bedroom. The door of the bath-room was immediately opposite the door that led to the corridor. Mr. Lockett, evidently, was still in his bath.

Hannibal, taking his courage in both hands,

advanced to the door of the bath-room and knocked. The sound of splashing suddenly ceased. Hannibal repeated the knock.

"Come in," roared Mr. Lockett. Hannibal at once opened the door, and went into the bath-room.

Austin Lockett was never a handsome man. He had a powerful face, and a powerful frame, but his greatest admirers could scarcely have called him handsome. As he sat in his bath, staring at Hannibal in open-mouthed surprise, he was certainly not the lady-novelist's ideal of an Empire-builder. He was too fleshy, too heavy beneath the eyes, and much too astonished. Empire-builders, as they appear in the pages of novels, are invariably as cool and imperturbable as Sherlock Holmes, even when complete strangers walk into their bath-rooms at a quarter-past-six in the morning.

Hannibal was very glad to see the look of blank bewilderment on the face of Austin Lockett. Since he had made up his mind to corner the South African, he could not very well have had him at a better advantage than in his bath. He found himself wondering, as he met the amazed glare of the great man, what the great Napoleon would have done under the circumstances.

Mr. Lockett spoke first. Seeing that he was the host, this was quite correct.

"Who the devil are you?" he demanded.

"One of your warmest admirers," replied Hannibal.

"Get out of it! D'ye hear? Get to hell out of this!"

"Certainly," said Hannibal. "But I ought to tell you, Mr. Lockett, that I've some important information for you."

Mr. Lockett, mechanically and vainly endeavoring to reach with his well-soaped hand the one spot between his shoulder-blades that he never could reach, looked Hannibal over from head to foot. "I don't want your information," he growled. "Will you get out of it, or shall I ring the bell and have you thrown out?"

"You can ring the bell if you like, and you can order me to be thrown out if you like, but you'll lose a piece of information that would be of the greatest value to you, and you'll also lose the support of the most influential newspaper in this country."

A look of appreciation slowly spread itself over Mr. Lockett's generous features. He had had plenty of experience of newspaper-men, and he knew to what lengths they will go to satisfy the demands of their editors, but this was undoubtedly the most daring newspaper-man he had ever encountered. Mr. Lockett admired enterprise, even when it took the form of inconvenience to himself. Besides, he was naturally curious to hear the piece of information which his visitor

appeared to think so important, and he was also anxious to hear the name of the newspaper which his visitor declared to be the most influential in the kingdom.

"Well?" he grunted.

"May I close the door?"

"Oh, if you like."

Hannibal closed the door, and then seated himself comfortably on a chair by the side of the bath.

"Before we get to business, Mr. Lockett," he began, "I should like to give you one small piece of advice."

"I don't want your advice."

"Yes, you do. I observe that you're attempting to accomplish the impossible. You're trying to reach a certain spot between your shoulder-blades that no mortal man, however great he may be in other ways, can reach without assistance. I want to advise you to buy yourself a very simple little implement called a bath-brush."

"What's that?" asked Mr. Lockett, at once interested.

"It's simply a brush with a handle to it, specially designed to save people from making the futile attempts which you're now making. Haven't you ever seen one?"

"Never."

"Don't they sell them at the Cape?"

"How the devil should I know? D'you think

I waste my time pottering about in stores looking for bath-brushes? "

"That's the worst of not being married," said Hannibal. "If you were married, Mr. Lockett, your wife would have provided you with a bath-brush long ago."

"I don't want to hear your opinions on matrimony, young man."

"No, I know that, but you'll never regret having heard about bath-brushes. May I have the great pleasure of sending you one? "

"No," said Mr. Lockett. "If I want one of these things, I can buy one for myself."

"But you never would buy one for yourself. People with great minds never pay attention to small details — that is to say, the majority of them don't. And yet it is the small details that no man can afford to overlook. Take myself, for example. You probably think me a small detail, and yet I'm one of the few men in London worth your time and attention."

Austin Lockett, at last desisting from the attempt to accomplish the impossible, looked more attentively than before at Hannibal. One of the open secrets of Lockett's success, as it has also been one of the open secrets of Lord London's success, was his ability to judge a man at sight. Whereas Lord London, however, is apt to make up his mind about a man rather too quickly, and does not, therefore, always give him-

self a fair chance, Austin Lockett would put his first impressions to the test again and again, until he had proved them correct. He was not prepared to say offhand that Hannibal was an exceptionally clever young man, or that he was a young man in whom he could implicitly believe, but he went so far as to admit to himself that his visitor was clever, and he felt inclined to believe him.

“What about this information?” he asked.

“I’ll give it you. Since you were last in England, Mr. Lockett, a daily newspaper has been started which is prepared to take a very great interest — and to lend the support of its columns — in the British cause in South Africa. Did you know that?”

“What paper is it?”

“It’s called the ‘Little Daily.’ Have you heard of it?”

“Yes, I’ve heard of it. There was a young fool with the name of that paper on his card who got on board the boat at Madeira, and said that he had been sent on purpose to get an interview out of me. I packed him off with a flea in his ear!”

“I know you did.”

Mr. Lockett had now stepped out of his bath, and was vigorously toweling himself.

“Oh, you do, do you? If he’s a friend of yours, you’d better advise him not to go about a

ticklish job in quite such a bald-headed way as that."

"He's not exactly a friend of mine," Hannibal explained, gently. "As a matter of fact, I sent him to Madeira."

"Oh! So you're the editor of this blessed paper, are you?"

"I'm the editor and the founder, and the proprietor. I sent two men to interview you, Mr. Lockett, and you turned them both down. So, as you see, I've come myself."

"What's your name?"

"Hannibal Quain."

"Well, Mr. Quain, you might just as well as saved yourself the trouble, because I don't give interviews to newspapers. You ought to have known that."

"I do know it, and that's exactly the reason why I want you to give one to me for my paper."

"But why should I when I've refused all the others?"

"Because, just as you're no ordinary celebrity, so the 'Little Daily' is no ordinary newspaper. It has already a circulation of nearly half-a-million copies, and is going up rapidly every day. In addition to that, it is the one paper in London which is prepared to take a special interest in South Africa. One of these days, Mr. Lockett, you may find yourself in a tight place; that sort of thing happens to all men who are out to do

big things. When that day comes, you might be glad to have a daily newspaper in England prepared to support you, and to look at the Imperial question from your point of view. I should be willing to do that if you could give me this morning some message for the readers of my paper which will show them, and will show England, that the task to which you have put your hand is a great one, and a noble one, and an unselfish one."

Mr. Lockett, without answering, finished drying himself, and then pottered down the little passage and into his bedroom. Hannibal followed. He knew that he had made an impression on the great man, and he felt that he had a real chance of achieving a magnificent *coup* for his paper. He was naturally excited, but he took care not to show his excitement, for he was determined that the obligation should be on the side of Mr. Lockett, and not on his own side.

"The English people," said Mr. Lockett, struggling into his shirt, "know nothing about South Africa and care less. Here they have one of the most magnificent possessions that has ever come within the grasp of any country in the world — a possession so vast and so rich that even I, although I have devoted my life to the furtherance of the country, cannot yet appreciate or comprehend the greatness of it."

He dropped his stud, and Hannibal politely picked it up and handed it to him.

"Your people here at home," went on Mr. Lockett, "seem to think of South Africa as a place which exists to provide them with dancing Zulus for circuses. Not one in ten thousand of you takes the trouble to come out and see what we're doing; not one in a thousand of you makes any attempt to grapple with all the intricate points of the racial question; not one in a hundred of you could even tell me offhand the number of English people living in Rhodesia.

"I come home to England every year, and every year I try to get the British Government to take some definite steps to settle the racial question. It's got to be settled, and settled pretty soon. If they don't settle it, then let them look out for squalls. My people are just about tired of the existing condition of things. If you came out there, and saw for yourself the daily bitterness and humiliations which British subjects have to endure, it would make your blood boil that people at home should remain indifferent and supine. After all, what are we working for? What am I working for? We're all doing our level best to make the most of this tremendous territory, not for our own sakes, but for the sake of the Empire of the future. The world is not so large that you Britishers can afford to despise such a

possession as South Africa, and I'll tell you this —"

He stopped abruptly, as though he had suddenly remembered Hannibal's presence.

"Please don't stop," said Hannibal.

"Are you taking notes, young man?"

"Not a single note."

"That's right."

"Because it wasn't necessary."

"What d'you mean?"

"I can remember everything you've said, Mr. Lockett."

"I daresay you can, but you mustn't print it."

"I'm afraid I must print it," said Hannibal.

"I tell you you're not to print it," roared Lockett.

"Why not? Don't you want to wake the people of England up to their responsibilities in the matter of South Africa? Don't you want to stir the Government up? What's the good of having a subject so deeply at heart, and talking so magniloquently about it, if I'm to be the only listener?"

"But I'm not at all sure what I've said," complained Mr. Lockett, suddenly becoming plaintive.

"You've said nothing that you need be frightened about. I shall write it up myself, and it will be so carefully done that you couldn't possibly improve upon it."

"Least said, soonest mended," grumbled Mr. Lockett.

"Does that mean that I'm not to use the interview after all?"

"Yes, it does."

"Now, look here, Mr. Lockett. You went to South Africa as a young man, and you had to make your own way there. You made it, but if you tell me that you're entirely independent of help from anybody, I shall take the liberty of disbelieving you. I went into journalism as a young man and had to make my own way; I've made it, but I'm big enough to admit that I can't get along without help. We both want help; I want your help, and you want mine. I want to print this interesting interview in my paper, and you want to have a London daily morning paper with an enormous circulation always ready to stand by you. Very well. Can't we strike a bargain which should be of the greatest benefit to us both?"

Mr. Lockett, by this time, was fully dressed for riding. He put on a hard felt hat, took up his gloves and his riding-whip, and then walked slowly toward the door. Just as he was going out, he turned, looking very thoughtful, and said to Hannibal:

"What did you say those things were called?"

"Bath-brushes," said Hannibal, promptly.

"Can I get one at any store?"

"Oh, yes, any large shop will do."

“ Good,” said Mr. Lockett. “ I’ll get one.” And he went out into the passage.

“ And the interview? ” asked Hannibal, following him.

“ One good turn deserves another,” replied Mr. Lockett, smiling for the first time since Hannibal had been with him. And with that he stepped into the lift.

If you care to examine the earliest files of the “ Little Daily,” you will find the interview with Austin Lockett that Hannibal wrote when he returned to the office. It runs to just two columns, and, not only did it have a most valuable effect on the public, but also proved to Fleet Street in general, and to Hannibal’s own staff in particular, the truth of his favorite adage, that a journalist can accomplish anything on this planet if he is the right man in the right place.

XIV

THE BOY IN HANNIBAL

ONE of the most refreshing things about Hannibal Quain, and, indeed, about Lord London, is the fact that he combines with a genius for journalism, and a genius for the business side of journalism, a boyish delight in his own wealth, success, and power. We all used to ask each other, as children, what we would do if we had a thousand pounds. We indulged in the most delicious dreams of houses built entirely of ginger-bread, and ponies with silver-mounted harness, and journeyings in little ships of our own to the coral-islands and palm-groves of Kingston and Ballantyne. When we grew up, however, and found ourselves actually in possession of that thousand pounds, did we realize any of these dreams? Not one. We were too busy over the business of collecting the second thousand pounds to enjoy the first, and so it goes on, and always will go on, except in the case of those who are lucky enough to remain boys and girls all their lives.

When Hannibal, fretful because the "Little Daily" was not lying upon every breakfast table

in the north of England and Scotland on the morning of its publication, suddenly conceived the idea of publishing the paper in duplicate from his own duplicate offices in the north of England, he showed his genius for the business side of journalism. And when, being faced with a possible shortage in the supply of paper because of a possible shortage in the supply of wood-pulp from which paper is made, he suddenly decided to buy two thousand square miles of forests in Newfoundland, and so render himself independent of the paper-making trade, he again showed his genius for the business side of journalism.

Fleet Street, knowing, perhaps, more of Hannibal the journalist than Hannibal the business man, was amazed by these undeniably brilliant strokes of business. Hannibal enjoyed their amazement with the boyish side of him, which was always bubbling up even in the very midst of the inevitable cares and worries of being at the head of a vast organization. It was the boy in him which gave him that intense delight in motor-cars, just as he had once found an intense delight in the bicycle, and just as his imagination is kindled to-day by flying-machines. It was the boy in him, again, that led him to devise and carry out a triumphal tour through Ireland in which his mother was the chief figure. It delighted him to unroll for her, by merely waving his check-book, this fascinating land of iron and velvet. He ap-

pointed himself her courier-in-chief, and found an exquisite pleasure in surrounding her with all the luxury of modern travel that money can buy. From Dublin to the wilds of Connemara, you will still hear stories of that princely trip — of the special trains, of the suites of apartments reserved by telegram for days in advance, of the special steamers on the lakes and rivers.

But, quite apart from the huge fortune that had come to him as the result of his enterprises, he had a boyish delight in the power that the ever-growing success of the "Little Daily" had given him. At the age of thirty-two, or thereabouts, he found himself in possession of a weapon with which he could, if he liked, hold at bay and even intimidate countless people of all ranks and in all positions. There were many, no doubt, who still laughed or sneered at him, but as he had prophesied, they did it in a corner and with their backs turned. When he looked out upon the crowded world, he saw nothing but a sea of smiling faces and a forest of applauding hands. He was certainly very freakish at times with this adulating inner public. He would try them very severely. He was no respecter of personalities. He allowed his writers to speak their opinions in his columns without let or hindrance, even though they might happen to tread on the corns, as they often did, of his friends and acquaintances. If the friends and acquaintances remonstrated, as

was only natural, Hannibal would reply, for example, much in this way:

“ You complain that you have been attacked in my paper. You say that you have produced a play at considerable expense, and that my critic has given it an unfavorable notice. You practically accuse him of malice, and you tell me these things in the hope that I shall dismiss him. That is your point of view, and it is quite comprehensible.

“ Now let us look at the matter from two other points of view. The first is that of the public. The public buy my paper because they want to be told whether your play is worth their time and their money. If, to please you, I print a false account of the merits of your play in my paper, I am disloyal to my public, and I am helping to impair the fabric which I have built up with so much care and labor, because the public will soon find out that I have printed a false account, and they will cease to believe in my paper. You reply that the account we have printed is a false account because your play is a very fine one, and you yourself gave a very fine performance in the leading part. If that is correct, and the public, the discriminating and non-discriminating public, are all agreed that my critic has done you any injustice, he will be reprimanded, and, if he continues to misrepresent your productions or the productions of other managers, he will be dismissed.

“Now let us look at the matter from a third point of view, namely, that of my critic himself. He may, or he may not, know that you are a personal friend of mine. I have not told him so because that might influence his judgment, and as I have said, I attach more importance to satisfying the readers of my paper than to satisfying my individual friends. But he certainly does know that it is safer, on the whole, to praise a production than to slate one. When he praises — and I may remind you that he has praised very highly many productions of your own — he knows that he is making a friend of you, and a friend of the author, and a friend of the players, and of everybody connected with the production. Obviously, it is to his own interest, especially if he cherishes any hopes of becoming a dramatist himself, to praise as often as he can, more particularly the plays produced by important and established managements. But you and I know very well that the proportion of good plays produced is about one in ten, and I should therefore be very suspicious of my critic if I found him praising, let us say, nine plays out of ten. Mind you, I have not told him that either; he has taken his own line from the beginning, and one of the things that recommended him to me when I made the appointment was the knowledge that he had a constitutional habit of plain speaking.

“One of the most difficult posts in Fleet Street

to fill is the post of dramatic critic on a paper with influence. If you find a man who is clever, he is often too clever to be disinterested. If you find a man with a large experience in theatrical matters, he is, so to speak, waterlogged by the number of his friends — or enemies — in the theatrical profession. If you find an honest fool, he is no good to anybody because he can be humbugged into thinking that a bad play is a good one. I don't mind telling you — and you can probably guess it for yourself without my telling you — that my dramatic critic is the most abused man on my staff; that's why I value him."

Here Hannibal once again showed his boyishness — the boyish passion for fair play.

It was the boy in Hannibal that made him accept the offer, which amounted to a challenge, of the proprietor of a famous daily paper in New York to edit the paper for one night. A grown-up person in Hannibal's position would have certainly declined the offer, realizing the impossibility of impressing one's personality on a strange staff in a single night. Hannibal jumped at the chance with a boyish glee, and managed to hit upon a very simple and effective method of showing the American public that there had been a new hand at the helm. He might have printed the paper entirely in red, but there would have been no sense in that; it would not have conveyed any of his own ideas of the ideal daily paper to the

American public. What he did do was simply to double the paper in half. The public were startled, the paper received a magnificent advertisement, and Hannibal issued, for one night only, a journal similar in size to his own beloved "Little Daily."

He has always been able to do very kind things in a very gracious way, and surely it is the boy in him that prompts such acts. Hard-headed men of business often feel the promptings of generosity; that is the boy in them struggling to be heard. But then the man of experience steps in, and tells the boy that it is only fools who are kind and generous; that a rich man is always a prey for the humbugs and charlatans of the world; that, if you give to one, you must give to all, and it would require a colossal fortune indeed to enable one to give to all.

Hannibal knew all these things well enough, just as Lord London knows them well enough, but he listened to the voice of the experienced man far less often than many another with his wealth and influence. There is a pretty story, which happens to be true, of the wife of a young novelist calling upon Hannibal. Hannibal, recognizing the name, and being in a boyish mood, told his people to admit the visitor. She, poor lady, must have been immensely frightened by the size of his private office, and the magnificence of the fittings, and the masses of choice flowers in

great vases in all parts of the room, nor must it be forgotten that her nerves had already been shaken by the long wait in the outer office, with the ringing of the telephone, the short, sharp reply, the constant coming and going of those who had business with the Great Man. How insignificant her own business seemed! Why, as a matter of fact, she had no business with him at all! How would he receive her? In all probability, he would be extremely annoyed with her for her presumption, would conclude the brief interview with a single word, and she would go home with the knowledge that she had done herself and her husband more harm than good.

None of these fears were realized. She found the most charming welcome waiting for her, and she found in Hannibal a man to whom she was presently chatting as easily and comfortably as with one of her husband's friends. Was it possible that this was the great Hannibal Quain? Was it possible that this was the proprietor of forty weekly papers, to say nothing of two daily papers and a monthly magazine? Why, this man, if he liked, could take up her husband and place him in the front rank of the novelists of the day. He could give him sufficient work to render them free from care for the rest of their lives. How easy became the problems of life when once you were in touch with those at the very top of the tree!

“ Good morning, Mrs. Kesteven,” said Hannibal, shaking her by the hand. “ I’m so sorry to have kept you waiting. What can I do for you? ”

He had come to the point with startling suddenness, but the thought of her husband, sitting at his small table in the bedroom of their lodgings, trying to write a story that should satisfy the requirements of an editor in its combination of strength and lightness, steadied her.

“ Take your time,” said Hannibal, noticing her nervousness.

“ Oh, thank you. I won’t keep you a moment, because I know how busy you must be. I really wanted to speak to you about my husband.”

“ Certainly. Your husband is very clever.”

It was not very much to say; it was not a difficult thing to say; it was entirely non-committal. Yet, to Mrs. Kesteven, those five words made as much difference as the sun makes to the world when it suddenly breaks through the clouds on a gray and mournful day. Mrs. Kesteven often wonders whether Hannibal knew that, in an instant, he thus won her heart; and she also wonders why great and powerful men so rarely say nice things of that sort to the poor and struggling people to whom they mean so much. Perhaps it is because a great and powerful man cannot understand that a word of encouragement from him is, in itself, a tremendous and highly-prized gift.

"Do you really think so?" Mrs. Kesteven gazed eagerly at the boyish face in front of her, surmounted by the now famous slant-wise fringe of fair hair.

Hannibal smiled.

"Why," he said, "don't you?"

"Oh, yes, of course I think him clever, but then I'm only his wife."

"It's a very responsible thing, Mrs. Kesteven, to be the wife of a man with great gifts such as your husband possesses. It is not only your duty to keep him in health, so that he may do his best work, but you also have the opportunity of helping to form his ideas and opinions. You are his first, and his nearest, and his most influential critic. His success is as creditable to you as to him."

"Yes, I quite realize my responsibility, but I wish he could be more successful. You have no idea how hard he works! People who read his stories and his books think that he can just turn them off without any effort, but if they saw him, as I do, with his face quite white and his eyes all gone dull just from the effort of trying to think out a really good idea for a story, I'm sure they would pay more attention to his work. The work that seems so light and fragile is just as difficult to do as the heavier and more pretentious work, but people seem to give all the credit to the men and women who turn out great chunks of highly-colored descriptions of scenery and great slabs of

hysterical emotion. It isn't fair! What they ought to consider is art! The people who do the most artistic work ought to have the greatest credit — not the people who do the most showy!"

Hannibal nodded. "Do you write yourself, Mrs. Kesteven?" he asked.

"Oh, yes, I write a little. That is to say, I write a great deal, but it's quite unimportant work — only rubbish, you know."

"What do you write?"

"Oh, I write for some weekly papers."

She suddenly blushed crimson, seeing that she had put her foot into it. But Hannibal, still freakish, would not let her off.

"What papers do you write for?" he persisted.

"Oh," stammered poor little Mrs. Kesteven, "just one or two little weekly papers — papers for girls and that sort of thing."

"Any of my papers, Mrs. Kesteven?"

"Well, yes, I do write for one or two of your papers."

"Just rubbish?" said Hannibal, smiling.

"I'm so sorry! Do forgive me! I ought not to have said that. I meant that the work I do is rubbish compared with the work that my husband does. I really asked you to see me because I wanted to talk about him — not about myself at all."

"Yes, I know, but I want to talk about you first. I know your work quite well, Mrs. Kest-

even. And I like it. Why don't you do more for us?"

"I should like to do as much as ever I can," replied Mrs. Kesteven, candidly, "but I'm always afraid to send in too much because I don't want your editors to get tired of me."

"They won't get tired of you as long as you keep up to your own level. Do you find that it worries you while you are writing that you have to please my editors?"

"Well, I suppose one would feel happier if one knew for certain that the story was going to be accepted."

"That's just what I mean. I'm certain that the way to get the best work out of people is to make them feel confident. You have done quite enough work for my papers, Mrs. Kesteven, for me to be sure that you will always reach a certain standard, but there is something lacking in your stories — I think it is probably the vitality that comes from happiness in one's work. Now, let us see whether we can't get that vitality into your next lot of stories. I will definitely commission you to write me twelve stories at the usual rates paid by the editors of those papers for which you work. Will you accept the commission?"

Accept it? Tears started to the eyes of little Mrs. Kesteven. Twelve stories, at five pounds apiece, would mean sixty pounds! Sixty pounds for certain would mean summer clothes for her

little girl, summer clothes for herself, arrears of bills that had been owing far too long, and a holiday at the seaside for her husband, herself, and their little girl! All these things this man could give her by merely putting his finger on a button, and he was going to do it! *Accept?*

Mrs. Kesteven nodded, being at the moment quite unable to speak. She knew that it was not the correct thing to reply with a nod when an influential proprietor of papers offered one a commission for twelve stories all in a bunch, but she felt, somehow, that he would understand.

Hannibal did understand. He understood so well that, having put his finger on the magic button, he walked across to the window while he was waiting for his secretary to enter.

"I want you to draw a brief contract for twelve short stories by Mrs. Kesteven to be completed within, say, six months. Mrs. Kesteven will sign it before she leaves, and you will kindly hand her a duplicate of the contract signed by myself."

"Oh," protested the little lady, "please don't bother about a contract!"

"Business is business," said Hannibal, gravely. "I want to make sure that you don't do me out of my twelve stories, Mrs. Kesteven." He turned again to his secretary. "And please draw a check for sixty pounds in favor of Mrs. Kesteven, and bring it to me at once to sign."

The secretary withdrew to carry out these instructions, and Hannibal turned to his chair.

"So much for that little stroke of business," he said. "Now, what can I do for your husband?"

Mrs. Kesteven hesitated. She had really written to Hannibal for this appointment in a moment of great anger. The editor of one of Hannibal's papers had definitely commissioned a story of her husband by word of mouth. Her husband had written the story and sent it in, and the editor had then gone back on his word, and denied having given the commission. This was what had brought Mrs. Kesteven to Hannibal's office, but, now that he had been so generous, what could she say? Quite apart from the fact that it would seem ungracious to complain in the face of what had happened, she really had no desire to get the young editor into trouble.

"I — I think I would rather change my mind about that, if you don't mind."

"But I do mind. You said in your letter that you wished to see me on important business connected with your husband. Has the important business settled itself?"

"Well, yes, I think it has."

"Then why are you here?"

"Well, you see, it has settled itself since I came."

Hannibal did not press her further. He judged, from her manner, that Mrs. Kesteven's

business had been to raise money, and that business, of course, was so settled with the signing of the check for sixty pounds. So the great grievance was never told, and the young editor got off scot-free. It should be added, by way of rounding off happily a very pretty story, that Kesteven is now quite independent of this particular editor, and that his agent, who can sell as many stories as Kesteven writes, before they are written, does not accept verbal commissions.

XV

HOW SHEILA BECAME HER LADYSHIP

“**I** DON'T think I shall go down,” said Mr. Gillfoyle.

“Why not?” asked Mrs. Gillfoyle, placidly.

They were sitting at the window of their room on the first floor of Herrick Court, Hannibal's beautiful country home, about twenty-four miles from London.

Hannibal and Sheila were very modest in the matter of homes. They had, of course, a house in the West End, but, apart from that, and Herrick Court, they had only a comparatively small house by the sea. Herrick Court was their chief and favorite place of residence. It was a stately Elizabethan house of gray stone, forming with its gigantic wings three sides of a square. It stood on fairly high ground, in the midst of some two thousand acres of meadow-land. There were several farms on the estate, but one saw nothing of them from the house or the terraces or the lawns. One saw nothing, in point of fact, but lawns and flowers in the foreground, and deep woods in the background, and, at night, one heard

nothing but the voices of Nature. If you strolled outside about ten o'clock in the evening, and looked at the old gray mansion, with its lighted windows, and listened to the gentle whispering of the distant trees and the sough of the wind across the dark meadows, while the scent of many blossoms came stealing to you through the night air, you might well have wondered whether Heaven itself could be more entrancingly beautiful than Herrick Court.

In the daytime, of course, it was busy enough. Hannibal saw to that. He loved busy scenes, and he made busy scenes wherever he went. There were huge touring cars rolling up to the main entrance, and other cars in the garage at the back being swished down and tuned up by Hannibal's retinue of French chauffeurs. The telephone to the offices of the "Little Daily" and his other publications would be going, and sleek footmen would be gliding about over the soft carpets, and one or two young secretaries would be hastening to and fro on Hannibal's business. And, of course, there would be the usual house-party, for Hannibal disliked loneliness. In addition to the young secretaries, and the major-domo, and Sheila, and Sheila's secretary, there would be a lord or two, and a baronet or two, and a millionaire or two, and a famous author or two, and a couple of singers, and a pianist, and a famous violinist, and an artist.

All these people would be kept at it by Hannibal from morning till night. The higher their station in life, the less energetic they were allowed to be, but still they were certainly kept at it. The members of the House of Lords would probably go for a ride in one of the big touring cars; the baronets would be sent to fish; the millionaires would be told to play bowls for the good of their figures; the famous authors, accompanied by the singers, would be sent along to the private golf-links; the pianist would practice his piano-playing on the grand piano specially provided for him in his own suite of apartments; the violinist would practise the violin in *her* suite of apartments; and the artist, if a landscape artist, would be painting a view in the grounds, or, if a portrait-painter, would be patiently awaiting a brief and restless sitting from Hannibal.

This afternoon, Herrick Court was busier than ever, for Sheila was holding one of her celebrated garden parties. The motor vehicles in which the guests had arrived, some from London, some from the neighborhood, and some from the south coast, reached down one of the side-drives for nearly a mile. The people who had come in these cars were assembled on the huge lawn on the south side of the mansion. They included every kind of person, from a bishop to a boxer, from a duchess to a dancer. They were of all ages, all sizes, and all shapes. Some were very rich,

some were moderately rich, some were only well-off, and some, although you would never have suspected it, were desperately poor. Some were in splendid health, some in indifferent health, and some in delicate health. But, whoever they were, and whatever they looked like, and however they felt, they all had one common characteristic — they were all tremendously gay. Many of them were laughing quite heartily the whole afternoon, others smiled the whole afternoon, and the rest either grinned or smirked, according to sex. But whether they laughed, smiled, grinned, or smirked, they were all as cheerful as cheerful could be, for gaiety and good clothes will carry you a very long way in society, which has no use at all for dumps and dowdiness.

As Mr. and Mrs. Gillfoyle looked down from their window, they could see their daughter, exquisitely gowned, tall, beautiful, gracious, self-possessed, stately, even queenly, moving to and fro among her hundreds of guests as though she had been born in a palace instead of a country rectory. Whenever she stopped for a moment, a small crowd collected round the spot where she was standing as though she were a kind of magnet among a forest of needles. Then there would be a sudden parting of the needles, and the magnet would slowly emerge from the center of the group and move away, while the needles immediately

turned in every direction in search of other needles to keep them company.

Much the same thing was happening to Hannibal, save that there was no time for the crowd to collect round him. He was not so much like a magnet as a piece of quicksilver. If you have ever seen people chasing a piece of quicksilver about the floor of a room, you will be able to imagine Hannibal among his guests. They all seemed anxious, in their well-bred way, to catch him and pick him up, but he was not going to be picked up, and their efforts were doomed to failure beforehand. Oddly enough, some of the oldest and slowest were the most successful in getting near to him, and one little man, with very bushy eyebrows and a small clean-shaven face, was close to him for so long that he seemed about to effect a capture. Indeed, he actually got so far as to slip his hand through Hannibal's arm, but, at that instant, Hannibal sighted somebody to whom he had to speak at the far end of the lawn, and was twenty yards away before the little man could follow up his successful grab.

"Because," said Mr. Gillfoyle, "I should be rather frightened in the midst of all that crowd."

"It doesn't seem to me such a very enormous crowd," replied Mrs. Gillfoyle, placidly. "We've been in just as big a crowd as that at the Bishop's garden-party."

“Yes, but those were only country clergy and their wives and daughters. One knew a great many of them, and one didn’t feel disconcerted. I don’t see any country clergy here — nothing less than an archdeacon at the very least.”

“Well, darling, you know you can be an archdeacon whenever you like. Hannibal could easily arrange it. In fact, I daresay he might manage a bishopric for you if you liked.”

“I shouldn’t like. I should look ridiculous in gaiters, and I’m afraid my sermons wouldn’t sound half so well in a cathedral as they do in our little church at Clinton Bagot.”

“Oh, it’s all a matter of a sounding-board,” explained Mrs. Gillfoyle. “I’ve noticed that when we’ve been to services in cathedrals. All you have to do is to speak very slowly, and let your voice hit the sounding-board, and then roll out into the cathedral. It doesn’t matter much what you say because the building makes it sound so nice and impressive. I sometimes amuse myself by taking away the sounding-board, and quickening up the sermons, and putting the preacher into your pulpit. It’s astonishing how unimpressive he becomes.”

“You mustn’t talk like that, my dear.”

“Why not?”

“Well, I’m not at all sure that it’s reverent.”

“Oh, nonsense. A sounding-board is only a sounding-board, and the man beneath the sound-

ing-board is only a man. Just look at our little Sheila down there. What is the difference between her and one of the girls in the country vicarages round Clinton Bagot? Of course, she's cleverer than most of them, and her appearance is very much in her favor, but it's the sounding-board that helps her to look like that, and talk like that, and move like that. It's this beautiful mansion at the back of her, and that beautiful dress, and, more than all, the knowledge of Hannibal's power and his wealth. I shall most certainly go down, and, if you watch, you'll see how gracefully I shall sweep across the lawn. You'll see how easily I shall chat with the Bishop of Kenilworth. I've always wanted to have a good talk with him on even ground, and this is my chance. If you're not an archdeacon by this time next week, it won't be my fault or the Bishop's."

"You'll take care not to be too free with him, won't you, my dear?"

"On the contrary, I'm going to be very free with him. I'm going to make him laugh, and I'm going to make him get me some tea, and then I'm going to put him through his paces. We got on very well when he came over to us for the last confirmation, but he was much too bishopy and patronizing. There won't be any of that this afternoon.

"Now, dear, you look very nice in your new coat, and your new boots, and your new collar.

Let me just brush you down a little, and then you must take me out on to the lawn. I'm quite sure that neither Sheila nor Hannibal would be pleased if we lurked in our room all the time. Besides, I'm sure all these people will be interested to meet Sheila's father and mother. Where is the clothes-brush? Ah, here it is. Stand up. Don't wriggle about. There! Now we'll go down."

Poor Mr. Gillfoyle was bound to obey. He gave his wife a rather shaky arm to lean upon, and then, despite the fact that he was trembling a little at the knees, they walked slowly and magnificently down the great staircase, through the great hall, and out on to the south lawn.

Hannibal caught sight of them at once, and came across to them.

"Splendid!" he said. "Now, tell me, is there anybody you particularly want to meet, Mrs. Gillfoyle?"

"Is the Queen here?" asked Mrs. Gillfoyle in her gentle voice.

"No," said Hannibal, "not this afternoon."

"Or the King?"

"No, I'm sorry I couldn't get him for you, either."

"They tell me the Prime Minister is a very cultivated man."

"Yes, so he is, but he hasn't turned up. I'm afraid you'll think it rather a rotten party, Mrs. Gillfoyle."

“ Oh, not at all. We’ve been watching the people from our window, and they all look very nice and friendly. Did I see my old friend the Bishop of Kenilworth somewhere about? ”

“ Yes, I believe he’s here. Shall I find him for you? ”

“ No, don’t run away. We shall be sure to meet him before very long. I’m going to ask him to make Papa an archdeacon. Don’t you think it’s a good idea? ”

“ An excellent idea! And, if he gives you any trouble, just let me know. I’ll soon bring him up to the scratch! ”

“ Oh, I don’t want you to frighten him. I daresay it’s only an oversight on his part. How nice Sheila looks! ”

“ Yes. Aren’t you proud of her? ”

“ Are you? ”

“ Very. You know that. ”

“ Then so am I. Ah, there’s the Bishop. ”

Hannibal, having seen Mrs. Gillfoyle walk off in the direction of the tea-tables with the Bishop of Kenilworth, introduced Mr. Gillfoyle to the member of Parliament for the division which included Clinton Bagot, and left the old gentleman hard at it on the subject of Disestablishment and Disendowment. He then went in search of his own mother, and found her in earnest conversation with the little man with the very bushy eyebrows, whose name was Pook.

Pook, as Hannibal approached, sprang up.

"Please don't move," said Hannibal.

"Oh, I'd much rather not move, believe me, but there are still a whole heap of people with whom I must have a word. Mrs. Quain and I have had a most interesting chat, Mr. Quain, very interesting indeed. In point of fact, we've been talking about you; haven't we, Mrs. Quain? Now I must be off about my business. See you later. Mrs. Quain has been good enough to suggest that I should stay the night in your lovely house, and, if you'll permit me, I'll telephone my man to bring down my things."

"Don't bother to do that," said Hannibal. "I'll tell Herbert to telephone."

"Will you? How very kind of you! That will be splendid! And, before I go, you and I must have a nice long talk; mustn't we, Mrs. Quain?"

Mrs. Quain the elder smiled graciously at the little man, who, after bowing repeatedly, and rubbing his hands a great deal, and, in short, doing everything he possibly could to show how friendly and cosy they all were together, at last fussed himself away and was swallowed up in the crowd.

Who was Mr. Pook? If you had put the question to him, he would have replied, with much smiling and hand-washing, that he was nobody — a mere private member of Parliament, and that was all. Everybody knew, of course, that Mr.

Pook was a private member of Parliament, and yet nobody treated him as a nobody. Mr. Pook never made a speech in the House, never served on any tiresome committees, and never contested a doubtful seat. When his own seat was once captured by a very popular Radical, Mr. Pook was quickly popped in as the representative of a constituency of which there had never been the slightest doubt.

Why? What was Mr. Pook's especial avocation in life? One met him everywhere, and, wherever one met him, one knew that he was not present in a merely social capacity. Things had a way of happening to people after one of Mr. Pook's visits; he left a trail behind him — a trail of joy or a trail of despair, as the case might be. Small wonder that the world was extremely civil to Mr. Pook. No sooner had he left Hannibal, for example, than a dozen people rushed forward who were anxious for a word with him. Mr. Pook was almost as much in demand, and almost as difficult to catch, as the host of the afternoon himself. . . .

So Mr. Pook stayed the night, and evinced uncommon anxiety to monopolize Hannibal. Had Hannibal wished for a prolonged and private chat with Mr. Pook, he would have found little difficulty in achieving his object. Whichever way he turned, there was Mr. Pook, with his little face all alight, and his eyes shining, and a look in them

which said quite plainly, "Now, Mr. Quain, here is your chance! Let us retire to your den for an hour, or take a stroll in the garden! I fancy that we understand one another pretty well, and it only needs a brief conversation to put everything in train."

Mr. Pook did not solicit this quiet chat in so many words, but nothing could have been more appealing or more eloquent than his dumb show. Hannibal, for his part, seemed to take a delight in foiling the little man. He made him listen to the professional pianist, and then he made him listen to the violinist, and then he made him play auction-bridge with two millionaires and a peer of the realm, and then, when poor little Mr. Pook was nearly dropping with fatigue, Hannibal found him a partner for a game of billiards. When the game of billiards was over, and Mr. Pook, very sleepy now, but still alert and determined, looked round for his host, he learned to his amazement that Hannibal had gone to bed. Mr. Pook was not accustomed to such treatment as this. He was in the habit of being sought out, and made much of, even fawned upon. He liked to be fawned upon, not because he was vain, but for the sake of the great Interests that he represented.

With a puzzled expression on his countenance and a sorrowful shake of his little head, Mr. Pook, too, went to bed. . . .

He was up very early the next morning, and

was rewarded by finding Hannibal in the rose-garden.

"Good morning, Mr. Quain," said Mr. Pook.
"I —"

"Good morning," replied Hannibal. "I hope you enjoyed your game of billiards last night?"

"Very much! Very much indeed, thank you. But I should have enjoyed it more —"

"Are you fond of roses, Mr. Pook?"

"Very! I may say that I am passionately fond of roses! And what beautiful roses these are! By the way, I —"

"Then let me find you one for your button-hole. Here we are!"

"Oh, thank you so much, Mr. Quain! It will be nice to take back to Westminster with me so fragrant a memento of my delightful visit to Her-rick Court."

"You're returning to-day?"

"This very morning, Mr. Quain. And that is why —"

"What a pity! Can't I persuade you to stay until after lunch? I have a particular reason for wishing it."

"Indeed! In that case —"

"Yes. I want you to have a round with me on my links."

"Oh, I see." Shadows of doubt chased one another very quickly across Mr. Pook's animated little face.

“ You won’t refuse? ” Hannibal looked point-blank at his guest.

“ No, no! ” said Mr. Pook, hastily. “ I shall be most charmed! ”

“ Then that’s settled. Shall we say eleven o’clock? ”

“ Eleven o’clock, by all means. I fear you’ll find me but an indifferent player, Mr. Quain. However, I’ll do my best to give you a good game.”

“ I feel sure that you’ll be successful,” said Hannibal, and they went in to breakfast.

The links at Herrick Court had just been laid out, and Hannibal had taken up the game of Exasperation and Fascination with his usual enthusiasm. It is hardly necessary to say that he was a most baffling player. If he made a hopeless fozzle of his drive, he would extricate himself from the difficulty with a brilliant mashie-shot, follow up by landing himself on the green with his iron, and hole out, from a distance of twelve or fourteen feet, in one. At the next hole, he would drive superlatively, and then, having plunged his opponent into the depths of despair, get badly bunkered and give up the hole.

The links were not large — only nine holes, but they were the prettiest links in the neighborhood. Hannibal had had one of the champions down to plan out the links and show him the rudiments of the game. The champion, having spent

the morning in the park, had mapped out what he considered to be an ideal course; Hannibal had then brought his own ideas to bear on the subject of bunkers and distances, with the result that, in the end, the professional had done little more than superintend the making of the greens.

Much the same thing happened when the champion was giving Hannibal his first lessons. Hannibal listened attentively while the champion explained the theory of the overlapping grip, and he watched attentively while the champion demonstrated its effectiveness. Then, in a few rapid sentences, Hannibal had disproved the whole theory, and, taking up the driver, promptly driven two hundreds yards in precisely the right direction with his hands at least an inch apart. When the professional finally left him, Hannibal was doing everything in a strictly unscientific way, and, as often as not, beating bogey. . . .

“Now, Mr. Pook, will you drive off first? You can see the flag. Let me warn you to keep out of rough on the right. If you once land yourself in that, you’ll be in no end of a bother.”

Mr. Pook planted his little feet very firmly and very wide apart, took a big swipe with his driver, and drove straight into the rough. An expert would have said that he did it on purpose, but Hannibal’s only comment was to play his own ball to within fifty yards of the green. He then helped Mr. Pook in the necessary search. Mr.

Pook, somehow or another, had failed to mark his ball, and, as they were playing without caddies, this naturally gave time for conversation.

“ I’ve been wanting to tell you, Mr. Quain, how greatly the Chief appreciates the support — the splendid support! — that you’re giving us in your wonderful paper! ”

“ Thanks,” said Hannibal. . . . “ Did he go as far as that? ”

“ Further! ” cried Mr. Pook, straightening himself and beaming at Hannibal. “ I don’t mind telling you, Mr. Quain, that the Chief — ”

“ Oh,” replied Hannibal, laughing, “ I meant the ball.”

“ The ball? No, perhaps the ball didn’t go quite so far as this. . . . As I was saying, the Chief wished me to express his warmest thanks for the noble work that you are doing. Now, Mr. Quain, what I want — ”

“ Here you are,” said Hannibal. “ You’ll need a good shot with your mashie to land you on the fairway.”

Mr. Pook made such a good shot with his mashie that his ball traveled just beyond Hannibal’s. As they walked along side by side, he began again:

“ The great value of your paper, Mr. Quain, as you will perfectly realize — ”

“ Which paper? ” asked Hannibal, suddenly.

“ Why, the ‘ Little Daily,’ to be sure! ”

“ Oh, I didn't know. When one has so many papers — ”

“ Of course,” put in Mr. Pook quickly, “ we don't overlook the enormous influence of the ‘ Evening.’ By the way, Mr. Quain, would you think me very impertinent if I asked you the combined circulation of your two papers? ”

“ Not at all. Which two? ”

“ Your two daily papers, I mean.”

“ Yes, but which two daily papers? ”

Mr. Pook came to a sudden halt in the fairway, and stood looking at Hannibal.

“ Have you more than two daily papers? ”

“ I have twelve,” said Hannibal, casually.

“ Good gracious me! I'd no idea of that! Some of them, surely, must be provincial papers? ”

“ Ten of them are provincial papers,” said Hannibal, “ but don't underestimate their importance on that account, Mr. Pook. I have recently acquired, for example, the ‘ Manchester Telegram.’ I suppose you know that in Manchester the opinion of the ‘ Telegram ’ goes a good deal further than the opinions of three London papers combined? ”

“ Yes, yes! So I've always understood! But I'd no idea that you were extending your connections in this way! Twelve daily papers! Dear me! They are all, I take it, Tory papers, Mr. Quain? ”

“At present,” said Hannibal, quietly. “My play, I think.” And he lifted his ball prettily on to the green.

Something seemed to have upset Mr. Pook’s nerves. At any rate, it took him no less than seven strokes to hole out.

“The Chief,” continued Mr. Pook, as they followed their balls in the direction of the second hole, “would very much like to show some recognition of your extremely valuable services to the Party, Mr. Quain, but, of course, he would like to feel sure that your sympathies were, if I may put it in that way, of a permanent nature.”

“Nothing in this life is permanent, Mr. Pook.”

“Very true! Very true!” Mr. Pook chuckled his appreciation of the repartee, and would no doubt have washed his hands very busily indeed had not one held a club and the other a bag. “A capital reply, Mr. Quain! But one can sometimes regard a man’s opinions on political matters as more or less settled, eh, Mr. Quain?”

“More or less,” agreed Hannibal.

“Exactly. Now the Chief is very anxious to feel that he has in you a staunch adherent, and, with that end in view, if I may express his sentiments in that way, he has sent me down here to approach you on the subject of some more or less adequate return for your splendid services to the Party. This is naturally a very delicate matter, but there *are* things in life, Mr. Quain —” Here

Pook looked up at his host with a questioning smile.

"There are," said Hannibal.

"Quite so. It is one of the privileges of the Chief's position that, in return for services to the Party, he can bestow certain honors that, as the opinion of the world goes, are not deemed altogether insignificant."

"You to play, Mr. Pook. And let me give you one piece of advice: Aim as high as you can."

Again Mr. Pook looked up shrewdly into the face of his host.

"Do you follow that advice yourself, Mr. Quain?"

"Invariably," replied Hannibal.

Mr. Pook then played. Unfortunately, his ball struck the bank and rolled back again almost to his feet.

"What did I tell you?" said Hannibal. "You see, Mr. Pook, in a situation like this, it is almost impossible to aim too high. I find myself confronted by a lofty bank to the summit of which I must drive my ball. Taking into consideration the limitations of my clubs and the skill with which I handle them, it is almost impossible for me to aim too high. If I do happen to overshoot the green a little, I can always play back. On the other hand, if I don't aim high enough, my ball strikes the bank, returns almost to the very spot from which it started, and I'm a stroke to the bad."

After Hannibal had won the second hole, and they had driven off toward the third, Mr. Pook seemed anxious to look a little more closely into Hannibal's theory of aiming high.

"Tell me, Mr. Quain, if you will: do you play this game according to the accepted theories, or have you a theory of your own?"

"I have a theory of my own."

"Then you don't trust to the generally accepted principles of the game?"

"No, because they don't happen to suit me. Without any desire to be egotistical, Mr. Pook, I have always regarded myself, even from boyhood, as being somewhat of an exceptional sort of person. Don't misunderstand me. I wouldn't for worlds have you think that I rate myself higher than any other man, but it seems to me that, by consistently aiming higher, I get higher."

"We're still talking about golf?" put in Mr. Pook, quickly.

"Certainly, although my remarks would also apply to the bigger game."

"In other words, Mr. Quain, you wish me to understand that what would satisfy the majority of men in your position —"

"There are no men in my position, Mr. Pook."

"Quite true. Very true. I spoke without thinking."

"You have a fine lie for a brassie-shot."

Mr. Pook took the hint, and brought off a fine

stroke. Hannibal followed, and, after an exciting struggle on the green, Mr. Pook won the hole.

"That leaves you one up," he said.

"Quite correct. The next is a short hole. I generally drive from this hole with my cleek."

The fourth hole also fell to Mr. Pook, leaving them all square.

"Do you know Monson?" asked Mr. Pook, carelessly, as they moved off to the fifth hole.

"Oh, yes. A very nice fellow."

"And a very successful fellow."

"Yes, a very successful fellow."

"He was very pleased with his knighthood."

"I'm sure he was."

"And Lady Monson also, I think, was very pleased."

"I'm sure she would be."

"That is one very charming thing, Mr. Quain, about these honors which we are able to confer — they give as much pleasure, or even more pleasure, to the wives as to the husbands."

"The pleasure of the wife is more than half the reward of the husband," said Hannibal.

"Monson has done a great deal for us, as you know."

"Really?"

"Oh, yes, a very great deal. We couldn't have offered him anything less than a knighthood."

"No," agreed Hannibal, "you couldn't."

There was something in the tone that caused

Mr. Pook to glance at his host very sharply from the corner of his eye, but Hannibal was apparently thinking more of his next stroke than of the trend of the conversation.

“Of course,” Mr. Pook reminded him, “there *are* lesser things.”

“Are there?”

“Oh, yes.”

“Worth consideration?”

“That depends upon the man.”

“Exactly.”

Hannibal won the fifth hole, and made a very pretty drive almost on to the green of the sixth. Mr. Pook, bracing himself for a mighty effort, drove right on to the green.

“Fine!” cried Hannibal. “Why, you’re quite a player, Mr. Pook!”

“I wish I had more time to practice,” replied Mr. Pook, modestly.

“You should run down to Herrick Court whenever you feel inclined for a game. My links are always at your disposal, and, if I’m not here myself, one of my secretaries would be only too pleased to give you a game.”

“That’s very kind of you — most kind. I shall certainly avail myself of the invitation. What a large number of people you must have in your employ, Mr. Quain!”

“Yes, a very large number.”

“Have you any idea how many?”

“Not precisely. Several hundred, however.”

“Indeed!”

Mr. Pook said no more until they had left for the seventh hole. He had won the sixth, leaving them still all square.

“I often wonder,” observed Hannibal, gently, “whether you people, when you are awarding these little prizes of which we have been speaking, take into account the services that a man is likely to render you in the future, or whether you dwell merely on the past. Take a man like Monson, for instance. Monson, I suppose, contributed very handsomely to the Party chest.”

Mr. Pook playfully raised the shaft of his driver to his lips.

“Quite so,” agreed Hannibal. “Perhaps I was wrong to mention any particular name. Let us take the case of any man who contributes to the Party chest. You award him a knighthood, and there the matter ends. He has made his contribution, and, in all probability, he will not make any further contribution. He receives his knighthood and that, as I say, is the end of the matter. But there are services, Mr. Pook, far above contributions to the Party chest, and a man who had rendered such services would naturally feel hurt if those services met with nothing more than a merely mechanical recognition, so to speak. I am, of course, talking quite impersonally, Mr. Pook.”

“ Oh, quite. I quite understand that. I see that we’ve arrived at another bank, Mr. Quain. This time I shall take your advice and aim high.”

He did so, and landed his ball exactly on the summit of the bank.

“ A good shot,” said Hannibal, “ but it might have been even better than that. A little more persuasion in the club, Mr. Pook, and you would have been on the green. As it is, you have given me an excellent chance of winning the hole.”

And win it he did, but Mr. Pook won the eighth, so that they were still all square when they found themselves at the ninth green. Mr. Pook’s ball lay two feet from the hole, and Hannibal’s was quite five feet away. They had each played, up to this point, seven strokes.

“ This is exciting,” said Mr. Pook.

“ Not very, I fear,” replied Hannibal. “ You’ve beaten me, Mr. Pook. Will you just hole out and put me out of my agony? ”

Mr. Pook took up his position with great care, measured the distance with his eye three times, played, and — missed.

Hannibal, in his turn, prepared to putt. In circumstances of this sort, he had one rule for himself which he always respected, namely, to play as though nothing depended upon it. The rule stood him in good stead, and the ball dropped easily and prettily into the hole.

“Fine!” cried Mr. Pook. “You’ve beaten me, Mr. Quain.”

“But what an excellent game!” observed Hannibal.

“Excellent! Most excellent! And I enjoyed it every bit as much as though we had been playing for a very high stake.”

“Weren’t we?” asked Hannibal, letting his putter fall into the bag and looking straight at Mr. Pook.

“Well,” replied Mr. Pook, “do you know, I believe we were.”

XVI

“ TO MEET SIR HANNIBAL QUAIN ”

THE largest dining-salon at the Alhambra Hotel had been set aside for the occasion. At first, it had been thought that the dinner would be a comparatively small affair, confined to the editors of Hannibal's publications and the heads of departments. But it was soon found that the junior members were most anxious to join in this congratulatory feast. The matter was therefore laid before Hannibal, who at once expressed his desire to meet, on this memorable occasion, as many of his staff as the room would hold.

The stream of diners began at seven o'clock, and continued without any break at all until twenty minutes to eight. Mr. Clement Jeakes, of course, who was to take the chair, felt very much at home at the Alhambra Hotel. He lunched there four days a week, surrounded by clever and beautiful people, and was well-known to the management and the waiters. Mr. Radford, too, now the editor of the "Little Daily," was on familiar ground in the magnificent entrance-hall and dining-

rooms of the Alhambra Hotel. Mr. Sandown strolled in at seven-thirty-five with his crush-hat rather at the back of his head, a cigarette between his lips, and his hands in his pockets. Billy Fox, the famous war-correspondent of the "Little Daily," was even later on the scene than Mr. Sandown, and slipped into the reception room through a curious little door in the corner. The junior members of the staff, to whom Billy was almost as great an idol as Hannibal himself, nudged each other gleefully as the war-correspondent came in by the small door, and told each other, with many winks, that Billy "knew his way about town all right" and had been having a cocktail in the bar.

The junior members felt rather awe-stricken by the magnificence of their surroundings. Many had arrived far too early, and, even then, had had to run the gauntlet of the "swells" in the foyer. Most of them were acutely conscious of the fact that their hats were bowlers, their overcoats not the correct shape or style to wear with evening dress, and they were not quite sure whether they ought to carry their hats through the hall or keep them on till they came to the cloak-room. They wondered how long it had taken Sandown to acquire that manner of being perfectly at home in the Alhambra Hotel, and whether they would ever become such a great, and such a wealthy, and such a casual character themselves.

Hannibal arrived in excellent time, and went to and fro among the junior members with a word for all of them. Had you followed in his trail, you would have heard this sort of thing, almost in the nature of a monologue:

“Good evening, Mr. James. How are you this evening? I liked your last number better than any that you’ve so far turned out. . . . Ah, Mr. Etherington. How are you? I’m looking into that little matter. You shall hear something in a day or two. . . . Well, Coke! Popped over from Berlin, then, to help me out this evening? That’s very good of you. How are things in Berlin? I expect I shall be looking you up one day next week. I’m coming over on business. . . . Good evening, Trundley. I saw that you settled that little matter quite satisfactorily. You must expect that sort of troubles — can’t run any kind of a paper without occasional difficulties cropping up. I’ve had thousands of ’em in my time. . . . Well, Lovell. How’s your father? Did that little trip down to Gibraltar do him good? I insisted on his taking a holiday. He doesn’t get away enough. . . . Ah, Lawley. A great match last Saturday. What we want, though, is a bowler. See if you can’t find one, will you? We can easily give him something to do in one department or another. . . .”

At last an official with a sonorous voice announced that dinner was served, and Mr. Jeakes

led the way into the great dining-salon, followed by Sir Hannibal, who was followed by Hasdrubal, who was followed by Socrates, Virgil, and Galahad. Mr. Radford came next with Billy Fox, and Mr. Sandown was just behind, hastily finishing a story into Billy Fox's right ear. Then came all the junior members of the staff, shrewdly observant of the gilding and the mirrors, and the long tables, and the glittering fish-knives and forks, and wondering why the melon had been served at the wrong end of dinner, but taking care not to ask each other anything about it, and, on the whole, already feeling much jollier and more at home.

Grace was said by the toast-master at the request of Mr. Jeakes, and then they all sat down and dug into the pieces of melon. Obsequious waiters poured wine into the delicate glasses to the right of each place, and the junior members immediately took a gulp, with the result that the subdued murmur of conversation suddenly swelled into something like a babel. Mr. Jeakes was seen to be sitting back in his chair, quite at his ease, and saying funny things to people at least six or eight places away. Sir Hannibal was talking in his animated fashion to a stranger on his right, who soon turned out to be no less a personage than the celebrated Sir John Sall, ex-Lord Mayor of London.

Billy Fox had a group of admirers all to himself, and kept them in roars of laughter. Mr.

Radford, as the reporters on the staff of the "Little Daily" noted, had quite thrown off the rather frightening editorial manner, and was raising his glass to various friends around him, and bowing low, and giving them one of his charming Irish smiles, and then drinking a little wine to show that he really meant it.

And so the wonderful evening went on, dish succeeding dish, and beverage succeeding beverage, until Mr. Etherington felt called upon to compare the decorations of the Alhambra Hotel rather unfavorably with the decorations of other hotels in which he had languished, and Mr. Coke saw no reason whatever why he should not be in Mr. Sandown's shoes within a couple of years at the outside, and Mr. Trundley said, and meant it, that he didn't care a damn for anybody.

At last the full round voice of the toast-master was heard above the clatter, calling attention to the Chairman. Mr. Clement Jeakes rose to his feet, and was received with much clapping and cheering, in which the reporters and editorial staff of the "Evening" were conspicuously enthusiastic. Mr. Jeakes called upon the company to drink the toast of the King, which, he said, needed no words from him to recommend it to their loyalty and to their approval. The company, with one accord, rose to its feet, and, amid murmurs of "The King!" duly honored the toast, Mr. Trundley adding, loudly and fervently, "God

bless 'im!" This, for some reason or another, caused general laughter, in which the chairman and the guest of the evening joined. Everybody sat down again feeling very pleased about everything, and the toast-master again called attention to the chairman. More applause at this, the reporters and the sub-editorial staff of the "Evening" now going so far as to hammer upon the table with the handles of their dessert-knives.

Mr. Jeakes said: "Gentlemen, it is my great privilege to give you the toast of Mr. Hannibal Quain (Several voices: "Sir!" and much laughter). I humbly beg his pardon; *Sir* Hannibal Quain. (Renewed laughter.) You must not blame me too much for making that little slip, because it is very difficult to keep pace with anybody who travels so fast as our guest to-night. (Much cheering and applause. Mr. Trundley sings the first line of "He's a jolly good fellow," but is hushed down.) It is only twenty years, gentlemen, since Sir Hannibal Quain made his attack on Fleet Street with a little paper entitled "You and I." (Loud applause, led by Mr. Sandown, and promptly backed up by the staff of "You and I.") That little paper, as you know — indeed, I may say, as all the world knows — at once sprang into a colossal success (Applause). In spite of many imitators, it still holds its own in the hearts and in the homes of English people the world over. Not content, however, with this single success,

Sir Hannibal Quain followed it up with many, and, if possible, more glorious successes, until to-day he is, without doubt, the greatest and the most powerful owner of newspapers and periodicals in this country. (Loud and prolonged applause.)

“ You see him before you this evening, gentlemen, at the early age of thirty-nine, a millionaire and a baronet! (Terrific applause, several of the junior members rising excitedly from their places and clapping their hands directly at Hannibal.) I believe I am correct in stating, gentlemen, that Sir Hannibal Quain, who is quite accustomed by this time to breaking records (laughter), has broken yet one more record in being created a baronet at the early age of thirty-nine! I believe I am correct in saying that never before in the history of this country has any man been created a baronet so young as Sir Hannibal Quain! (Great applause.)

“ Well, gentlemen, I am not going to detain you by making a long speech (“ Go on! ”) No, gentlemen, I will not go on because there is nothing new that I can tell you about our guest to-night. You all know his genius for organization, his genius for journalism, and his genius for discovering the right man for the right jobs. (Much applause and some laughter.) You all know how quick he is to discover the slacker and the waster; (“ We do ” from Mr. Trundley, and much laughter); but you also know that he is equally quick

to applaud, and to encourage, and to promote the clever man, the energetic man, and the loyal worker (Tremendous applause). I will therefore ask you to charge your glasses, and to drink with musical honors the health of our chief, Sir Hannibal Quain!"

Up sprang the company, and, in varying keys but with great heartiness, the toast was musically honored. Down they sat again, and Mr. Jeakes then called upon Sir Hannibal Quain.

Hannibal was greeted with a great burst of cheering that was heard all over the hotel. It was quite like him, in the midst of all this excitement and enthusiasm, to be the calmest person in the room. He must have felt considerable emotion, for no man could have stood in his place and looked at those eager young faces without feeling emotion, but he betrayed it neither in his face nor in the sentiments he expressed. He said:

"Mr. Chairman and gentlemen, I wish to thank you very heartily indeed for the very kind way in which you have received the toast of my health this evening. It was a source of considerable gratification to me when I learned that those in authority wished to confer upon me this very great honor, and, gentlemen, it was a source of considerable gratification, not so much because it was upon me as an individual that the honor fell, but

more for the reason that I knew and felt that those in authority, in thus honoring me, were honoring all of you, my loyal colleagues. (Great applause.) I think I know, gentlemen, the spirit in which those in authority decided to confer this honor upon the firm of which I happen to be the head. They said to themselves, 'Here are all these young people working away to the very best of their energies and abilities, and it behoves us to do something for them.' (Applause.) I am sure, gentlemen, that that was what they had in their minds, and I want you, therefore, each one of you, to take encouragement to himself from the recognition that has been granted to our business.

"Mr. Jeakes has said that I am as quick to recognize the good worker as I am to get rid of the slacker and the waster. I hope that is true, gentlemen. (Applause, and cries of "It is.") If that is true, gentlemen, I can assure you that I intend to go on in the way that I have commenced, and I use the word commenced advisedly, for if so much has been accomplished in the last twenty years, who shall say what the next twenty years may bring forth? (Enormous applause lasting a full minute.) Mr. Chairman and gentlemen, once again I thank you."

There were a few more speeches after that, but the greater portion of the evening was given up

to comic songs and ventriloquism. The company did not break up until after eleven o'clock, and portions of it remained together in various places until the small hours of Sunday morning.

Hannibal and Hasdrubal drove off, amid much raising of hats and waving of hands, in Hannibal's electric brougham.

"A very successful evening," observed Hasdrubal.

"Quite."

"I thought Jeakes's speech very happy — just the right length."

"Yes, very happy. . . . By the way, what are you doing to-morrow?"

"Well, I wanted to get some golf."

"Can you come down to Herrick Court with me in the morning? You could have a round or two there in the afternoon."

"Business?"

"Yes, rather important business."

Hasdrubal laughed. "I never knew such a chap as you, Han," he said. "I should have thought that even you would be satisfied for a bit."

"That's just it. I want to get things so arranged that I can take more time off. Will you call for me at eleven o'clock?"

"All right, if it won't wait."

"Thanks. Good-night, Has."

"Good-night, Han."

And so the brothers parted. Hasdrubal knew very well that, whatever arrangement might be schemed out on the morrow, the one thing Hannibal could not and would not do was to cut himself off from the office.

XVII

“SHARES IN THE ‘LITTLE DAILY’ ”

“NOW,” said Hasdrubal.

He had motored down to Herrick Court with Hannibal, and he had played a round with a member of the Cabinet and beaten him, and he had lunched. Now the brothers were sitting quite by themselves in a secluded corner of the South Terrace. Hannibal was not smoking, but Hasdrubal had just lighted a cigar. A footman had placed his coffee on a little table at his left elbow. The sun was shining, there was not a cloud in the sky, but a gentle breeze just fanned their faces and helped them to think.

Twenty years had passed since Hannibal had dashed down to Clinton Bagot on his bicycle to secure Sheila as his helpmate. The twenty years between nineteen and thirty-nine make far more difference in a man, of course, than the twenty years between thirty-nine and fifty-nine. Hannibal was still clean-shaven, he was tending neither to baldness or grayness, and his long fair fringe was still brushed slant-wise across his forehead.

The only indication of the passage of those twenty years was an increase in weight. He was

not by any means gross, for his habits of life were Spartan in the extreme, but his shoulders were broader and his face fuller. He had always been rather commanding in appearance; there was a ruthless look about those clear blue eyes that was very largely responsible for the exaggerated stories of his steam-roller tactics so prevalent in Fleet Street. His fantastic success, naturally, had done nothing to mitigate this somewhat imperial demeanor; nineteen years ago, he had had the air of a boy who meant to succeed in life — to-day he had the air of a man who had succeeded in life, but not fantastically, not beyond his expectations. You would not have said, had you met him this Sunday afternoon for the first time, that his life's work was done; you would have been more likely to wonder what that alert look and resolute compression of the lips portended in the future.

Hasdrubal, as we noted in our opening chapter, was rather bigger in frame than Hannibal. The family resemblance was very strong; Hasdrubal, too, had straight fair hair and blue eyes and a commanding look; but Hasdrubal's face was less mobile than Hannibal's, partly due to the fact that he wore a fairly heavy mustache. We shall have done Hasdrubal a great injustice if the reader has come to look upon him as a mere adjunct to Hannibal, whose position in life had been a present to him from his elder brother. Hasdrubal would

be the first to admit that Hannibal provided him with his great opportunity in life, but, at the same time, he had very great gifts of his own, and it is difficult to say to what position of wealth and importance he might not have risen had he not devoted his financial talents to the furtherance and consolidation of Hannibal's business. As a matter of fact, he was destined, before very long, to be the recipient of an honor precisely similar to that just bestowed on Hannibal; but it must be remembered that this is a story of Hannibal, and not of Hasdrubal, or of his younger brothers.

"Now," said Hasdrubal.

"I told you last night," Hannibal began, "that I wanted to put things on such a basis that I shouldn't feel myself so tied to the office."

"Getting tired of it?"

"No, I'm not tired of it, but one cannot continue in the same groove without running the risk of getting tired, and to get tired is to get bored, and to get bored is to get old. I shall always, as you know, keep a fatherly eye on all my papers, especially the 'Little Daily.'"

"I'm sure you will," said Hasdrubal, smiling slightly.

"The 'Little Daily,'" continued Hannibal, "is no longer in a state of infancy or even in a state of youth. It has grown up into a very sturdy manhood, and, like all sturdy young men, it demands to go out into the world."

"In other words, you're going to turn it into a limited liability company."

"No. I'm not going to turn it into a limited liability company. I hate the thought and I hate the phrase. The 'Little Daily' is far too big a thing to be sold to the public like a pound of cheese. I want the people who buy and read the 'Little Daily,' and the people through whom it is sold, and the people who work for it to feel that it is bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh. I know as well as you do that we could easily raise a million pounds or so by selling the 'Little Daily' and the 'Evening' and the 'Saturday Postman' to the public, but what would be the good of that to me? What do I want with a million pounds just for the sake of the million pounds?"

"You could still keep a controlling interest."

"Yes, I know that, and I always shall keep a controlling interest in my papers as long as I live, but don't you see what I'm driving at? I want them—especially the 'Little Daily'—to become the property of the great family of Great Britain. Now, how is this to be achieved? Why, by distributing the shares in small parcels to a huge number of people with a variety of interests, instead of letting them be snapped up by large investors and Stock Exchange operators. Whenever I motor through an English village, and see the contents-board of the 'Little Daily' outside the shop of a small newsagent, I want to feel

that that small newsagent has a real personal interest in the prosperity of the 'Little Daily.' So that there must be a certain proportion of shares set aside for the retail trade. There must also be a certain proportion set aside for the wholesale trade. The advertisers should be allowed the first chance to buy another section of the shares, and I want very particularly the men who have worked with me in building up the paper to have a proprietary interest in it."

"A very excellent scheme," agreed Hasdrubal.

His business intelligence at once grasped the fact that Hannibal had hit upon an idea which should insure, so far as any business arrangement could insure it, the permanent commercial welfare of these papers. This, it is interesting to note, is exactly what was always happening to these fortunate young men: Hannibal would be seized with a wonderful ideal, and would expound it to Hasdrubal with all the glowing enthusiasm of a Crusader. Hasdrubal might at first feel a little skeptical, but presently he would come to see that that glorious dream was based upon a very solid foundation of commercial practicability; Hasdrubal would then become every whit as keen upon the ideal as Hannibal, and together they would work out the details and bring the matter to a victorious issue.

"Yes," mused Hannibal, "I think it is a grand scheme."

"When did you think of it?"

"Last night at dinner."

"When you were making your speech?"

"No, when Jeakes was making his speech. I looked round the room, and I saw all those young fellows eagerly following every word, and applauding any kind reference to me with all their hearts. And I said to myself, 'What can I do to repay all this loyalty? Why should all these young fellows be content to work for me instead of working for themselves? Why shouldn't they all give me notice to-morrow, and start on their own just as I did twenty years ago?' And then I thought, 'What a splendid thing it would be if they could all have some share in the advancement of my papers over and above their mere salaries!' And then, in an instant, the plan came into my head that I have just sketched out to you."

"By the way," asked Hasdrubal, "have you thought who the directors are to be?"

"Yes. Jeakes will, of course, be one; you'll be another; and Radford will be the third."

"That means that Radford must hold a substantial number of shares."

"I know — we must arrange that. I should like him to have enough shares to make his wife and family feel assured as to the future. He will

apply for the shares and pay for them, but I shall see to it that they don't cost him anything."

"You're a good sort, Han."

"I'm very fond of Radford. He has worked splendidly for me and with me, and, apart from that, he has stability. You don't see as much of him in the office as I do. The time to appreciate Radford is when there is anything big on — when other people are getting panicky and look like losing their heads."

"In other words," suggested Hasdrubal, "when you get the bit between your teeth?"

"Radford certainly has a restraining influence," admitted Hannibal. "Sometimes I find his very firm hands on the reins a little irksome, and it tends to make me restless. But, if he can hold me, he can hold the rest of the team, and that is the sort of man I want as my editor. I'm not afraid of the paper lacking fire; we're far more likely to get too much fire into it than too little. The 'Little Daily' has reached a point when the policy must be constructive and not destructive. The destructive policy may make livelier reading, but the country deserves something more of us now than lively reading. A paper with the huge circulation of the 'Little Daily' has a mission, and its mission is to safeguard the interests of the public. Radford, at bottom, is a serious-minded fellow, as well as an exceptionally able editor. It will be a very great pleasure to me to feel that I

have secured his lifelong interest in my paper, and, I don't mind adding, a very great comfort. . . . Well, that's enough business for a fine Sunday. Would you like another round? "

" Yes, I think another round would suit me very well. Should I put all this in train to-morrow? "

" Yes, and I will have an announcement prepared for the paper. We must get a good line for the contents-bills. How do you think, ' SHARES IN THE LITTLE DAILY ' would look? "

" I think it would look very pretty," said Hasdrubal.

XVIII

DINNER FOR TWO IN DOWNING STREET

A YEAR had passed since the conversation recorded in the last chapter took place on the South Terrace at Herrick Court. It had been a year of wonderful prosperity in the lives of Hannibal's papers. The formation of the company had been a complete success, and it not only stimulated the interest of the Trade and the advertisers, but also awakened the public to the fact that the "Little Daily" was actually a thriving commercial concern. Old-fashioned people rubbed their eyes when they read the account of the first year's trading as a company. They had so often told each other, and so thoroughly believed, that a halfpenny daily morning newspaper was a wild-cat scheme at the best that they were hard put to it now to realize that the "Little Daily" had come to stay.

But, while it had been a year of prosperity for Hannibal's papers, it had been a year of grave misgivings, to say the least of it, for the country at large. A statesman had returned from South Africa imbued with the idea of Empire, and he told his fellow-countrymen that the only way in which

the British Empire could be consolidated was to put the Empire on a family basis; that is to say, England must regard herself in the light of a mother, and must regard the Colonies in the light of children. Just as the mother enables her young children to make their way in the world before she lavishes her care and attention on the children of her neighbors, so England must encourage trade with her Colonies by allowing them to deal with the Old Country on rather better terms than England gave to other people.

England, as we have said, was considerably exercised in mind over this suggestion. No two men seemed to be agreed upon it. There never was a more fruitful topic for argument. Whenever two men met, the question was bound to crop up, and, while one man saw in the suggestion a great scheme for the welding together of the Empire, the other saw in it nothing but ruin and devastation and starvation. They would begin by talking quietly, reasonably, logically; this would continue until they reached the inevitable point when knowledge ended and conjecture began. Conjecture invariably leads to flights of imagination, flights of imagination lead to wild statements, and wild statements lead to vigorous contradiction, and so come anger, abusive epithets, flushed faces, loud voices, broken friendships, and, sometimes broken noses.

This sort of thing was going on all over the

country in every possible shade of society. In the House of Lords, in the House of Commons, in the clubs, at dinner-parties, at garden-parties, in theaters, in music-halls, in the drawing-rooms of bishops, and the hovels of laborers — Tariff Reform was the burning question of the hour, and the question upon which no two men could agree.

Hannibal, of course, had to be well in it. His attitude was rather curious. One would have supposed, knowing him as a man of imagination, and a man whose ideas and interests were not limited to these islands, that he would have plumped for the consolidation of the Empire by means of preferential treatment at all costs; that he would have said, "Expense be hanged! What does it matter if we are ten millions, or a hundred millions, or a thousand millions out of pocket! At all costs, the Empire must be drawn closer together, for we exist as an Empire and not merely as the British Isles!"

But that was not Hannibal's attitude. His papers spoke, it is true, in glowing terms of the unity of the Empire, but month after month went by, and the readers of the "Little Daily" could not exactly discover whether they were to support the suggestion of the eminent statesman who had been their idol, or whether he had made the one great mistake of his career. Nor were they alone in their doubt. The policy of the "Little Daily"

was causing a good deal of anxiety in Downing Street.

Downing Street was not so foolish as to conceal from itself the influence of the paper among the voters of the country. Members of the Government were always moving to and fro in the constituencies, and, wherever they went, keeping their eyes open as it was their duty to do, they saw people with copies of the "Little Daily" in their hands. They saw it on book-stalls, and they saw it in railway-trains, and they saw it in hotels, and they saw references to it in other papers, and they saw it in the houses of their friends.

But, quite apart from the "Little Daily," and the "Evening," they thought of those ten provincial papers, the news of the purchase of which had caused Mr. Pook to fizzle several strokes on the links at Herrick Court. They could easily imagine the combined effect of all these daily papers on the minds of the thousands and thousands of readers. They tried very hard to get Hannibal to commit himself definitely, therefore, to the policy of Tariff Reform, but, with the astuteness to which they had now become accustomed, he easily succeeded in eluding their bravest efforts. Dangerous invitations to dinner invariably found him with a previous engagement; his own dinner parties, at this period, failed to include any leading light of the Tariff Reform party;

they knew he was in England, they knew he was in London, and they knew he was in daily attendance at his office: and still not one of them could bring him to book on the subject.

The worst of it was that, as the weeks went by, the editorials of the "Little Daily" seemed to be growing positively hostile to the policy to which the Government was committed. Leaders of the Party assured each other that this was merely a case of nerves on their part, but the assurance was made without conviction. A general election might be upon them at any moment, and they shuddered to think of the terrible havoc that would be wrought in their ranks if Hannibal's entire group of papers, led by the "Little Daily" and the "Evening," was ranged on the side of the enemy. Such a disastrous state of affairs could not be tolerated even in thought.

The climax came on a certain morning in June. The leaders of the Party awoke one morning to find awaiting them a definite challenge in the leader of the "Little Daily." If, said the leader, Tariff Reform meant an improvement in the condition of the People, and Ministers were prepared to pledge themselves to that, well and good, but, if it meant an increase in the cost of living, the People would have none of it.

Here, at last, it seemed, was the pronouncement for which they had been waiting. It had been generally admitted that the Old Country must be

prepared to make some sacrifices for the sake of the New Country. It had been explained, with a great deal of patriotic eloquence, that parents could not advance their children in the world without denying themselves something. It had been stated, certainly, that the parents need not deny themselves very much; in order to show the parents just how much they would be expected to deny themselves, two loaves had been held aloft at a meeting in Birmingham by the statesman responsible for all this to-do, and people had seen for themselves that the loaf they could buy for five-pence-halfpenny under the new condition of things was very, very little smaller than the loaf they could buy for five-pence-halfpenny under the present condition of things; still, there was no concealment of the fact that they would have to deny themselves that fraction. And now, in the face of these admissions, came the "Little Daily" declaring that the parents would deny themselves nothing. It was too bad! It was illogical! It was unfair! It was unpatriotic! It was unkind!

On the afternoon of the day upon which his leader appeared in the "Little Daily," Hannibal and Mr. Radford were sitting in Hannibal's large and sumptuous room surrounded by the morning and evening daily newspapers. They had expected their pronouncement to cause a flutter, and they were not disappointed. The Tory papers were paternally reproofing; the Radical papers

were guardedly jubilant; the only papers that gave unqualified support to Hannibal's declaration were his own papers.

Hannibal tossed an evening journal to the floor and looked at Radford. Radford smiled.

"They don't seem to like it," said Hannibal.

"Did you expect they would?"

"I don't care whether they do or not."

A slight pause. Radford was thinking. He never spoke without thinking, especially during these deliberations with Hannibal.

"What about to-morrow?" he asked, at last.

"What about it?"

"What are we going to say?"

"Just what we've said to-day."

"What's that?"

"Don't you know?"

"No, I don't."

"Well, I should advise you to read it."

"I have read it. I know it by heart. But I don't know what it means."

"It means what it says."

"But what does it say?"

"Just what it means."

Radford laughed. "That doesn't seem to get us much further."

"I don't understand you."

"*I* don't understand *you*."

"That isn't my fault."

"If you'll pardon my saying so, I think it is."

I regard myself as a person of ordinary intelligence. If I don't know what you mean, how are other people to know what you mean? "

" You're not a person of ordinary intelligence, Radford. That's where you make a mistake. You're a person of trained intelligence. You bring the journalistic mind to bear on a simple statement, and then you say you can't understand the simple statement. But, because you don't understand it, you mustn't suppose that other people won't understand it."

" I understand that they think they do, but what do they understand from it? "

" They undersand precisely what we've said."

" But we've said nothing."

" Yes, we have. Read the leader."

" Very well." Radford took up a copy of the " Little Daily " and gravely read the leader from start to finish. Then he looked across at Hannibal.

" Well? " said Hannibal.

" I'm no further."

" You don't need to be any further."

" Yes, I do."

" Then, my dear fellow, what on earth do you want to know? "

" I want to know whether we're going to support the Government or whether we're going to throw them over."

" You want to know more than I know myself.

Don't you see, Radford, that it isn't our turn to move? "

" You expect them to move? "

" Yes."

" When? "

" At once."

" Very well. Then I'll go upstairs and wait."

" Why not wait here? "

" With pleasure." Radford sat down again.

It was a curious situation. Here, on the one side, were two men, in an independent position, holding in their hands a huge weapon which they were at liberty to turn either upon the enemies of the Government or on the Government itself. A mile away, in Downing Street, were the members of the Cabinet, wondering how they were to prevent that huge weapon from being turned upon themselves, and how they could make sure of its being turned upon their enemies. . . .

Hannibal and Radford sat in silence for nearly ten minutes, just as though they were waiting for something to happen. And, at the end of ten minutes, something did happen. The telephone on Hannibal's desk gave a tiny tinkle.

" Shall I answer it? " asked Radford.

" No. I'll answer it myself."

It might have been the most ordinary communication, and yet both seemed to know instinctively that it was not.

Hannibal seated himself at his desk, drew the

instrument toward him, and took up the receiver.

"Yes? . . . Yes . . . What? . . . I'm Sir Hannibal Quain . . . What? . . . Certainly . . ."

He turned to Radford, unable to repress a slightly triumphant smile.

"Here he is," said Hannibal, in a low voice to Radford.

"Who?"

"The Chief."

"Himself?"

Hannibal nodded, and turned again to the telephone.

"How-d'you-do, Mr. Bothwell? . . . Yes, it's Quain speaking. . . . This evening? . . . At eight? . . . I shall be delighted. . . . Good-by."

Hannibal hung up the receiver and turned once again to Radford.

"Well," he said, "you shall be out of your quandary before we go to press to-night. Bothwell has asked me to dine with him, quite alone, at eight."

"Good," said Radford. "How much shall I keep open?"

"The leader, of course, and the first news-columns. See Pocock at once, and tell him we shall be late with the leader-page."

"Right," said Radford, and he went quietly about his business.

Left alone, Hannibal paced the floor for a few moments, deep in thought. He then took up his telephone and asked to be put through to Lady Quain. . . .

"Is that you, dear?"

"Yes, dear."

"I just wanted to let you know that I shall be dining out to-night."

"Of course. We're dining with the Mortlocks."

"Oh, bother!"

"You really must go this time, dear. You've disappointed them twice lately."

"Well, I'm afraid I must disappoint them a third time."

"Oh, Han! They'll be furious!"

"I can't help it. You must tell them it's a matter of business."

"Is it really important business?"

"Yes, it is rather important."

"Where will you have your dinner?"

"I'll give you three guesses."

"Oh, at the club, I suppose."

"No, not at the club."

"You're not to have a chop at the office. I absolutely forbid it. You know what Sir James said about meals in the office."

"No, I'm not going to have a chop at the office."

"Why are you so mysterious? Is it something exciting?"

"Well, it may prove exciting or it may not."

"Don't tantalize me any longer! Do tell me!"

"I'm dining in a little side-street off Whitehall."

"A little side-street off Whitehall!" repeated Sheila. "I don't in the least understand!"

"A little street called Downing Street."

"Oh, Han! How dull!"

"No, I don't think it will be dull."

"Is it a very big dinner?"

"No, I shouldn't call it a big dinner."

"Oh, I'm glad it isn't one of those dreary official things. Who's going to be there?"

"I am."

"I know that, duffer. Who else?"

"Only one other person."

"Good gracious! I hope it's somebody interesting."

"Yes, he's generally considered good company."

"Do tell me who it is!"

"It's a man called Bothwell."

"Han! Just you and Bothwell? Aren't you rather frightened?"

"Not a bit, but I think he's rather frightened."

"Yes, poor dear, I can quite understand that. You must be very kind to him."

"I'll be awfully kind. By the way, I shall be busy here for some little time yet. Would you mind sending Herbert along about seven o'clock with my things? I'll dress in the office."

"All right, dear. Have a nice time. Will you be very late?"

"I may be rather late, because I shall have to come back here after I leave Downing Street. Don't sit up if you're sleepy."

"I shall be awake, whatever time it is. Mind you come and tell me all about it directly you come in."

"All right, dear. Good-by."

Twenty years ago, Hannibal would certainly have been frightened at the idea of dining *tête-à-tête* with so great a personage as Bothwell, and he would have been still more frightened had the dinner been arranged to take place at Bothwell's official residence in Downing Street. This evening, as his electric brougham stopped before the door of the historic residence, and his footman sprang from the box to help him out, and another footman came hastening down the steps to let him in, and a third footman held open the door as though to assure him that there was no mistake at all about the matter, and a fourth footman ushered him into a reception-room, Hannibal was not conscious of even the slightest tremor. His

equanimity was due to the fact that he was master of the situation, and knew it. He had not asked Bothwell to ask him to dine *tête-à-tête* at Downing Street; Bothwell had, of his own free will, arranged the matter. This meant that Bothwell wanted something which it was in Hannibal's power to grant — on the whole, a very pleasant feeling to have when one goes to dine with one of the greatest men in the world.

When Mr. Bothwell entered the room, however, you would never have supposed that he was at a disadvantage. A tall man, a good deal older than Hannibal, with a pronounced stoop, a very intellectual face, a manner exquisitely refined, and a smile of great charm, you would have said that Mr. Bothwell could never be at a disadvantage under any circumstances whatever. And yet it was not his height, or his breeding, or his knowledge of men, or the consciousness of his charming personality that gave him this air of perfect self-confidence; it was merely the possession of an intellect superior to nine hundred and ninety-nine of the intellects with which he came in contact. Mr. Bothwell had long since discovered that there were very few men indeed on the surface of the globe who could hold their own with him in any discussion, with the exception of experts on technical matters with which he had, at the most, but a superficial acquaintance. Your expert is always a

tyrant, and Mr. Bothwell was careful never to engage in any disputatious arguments with experts.

Hannibal, of course, was an expert in the newspaper business; on the other hand, Mr. Bothwell was an expert in the political business. Both these men, therefore, were supreme in their own way, and each was anxious to meet the other, not on the other's ground, but on his own ground. It promised to be a very interesting little dinner.

"Good evening, Sir Hannibal," said Mr. Bothwell, shaking hands. "I do hope I haven't kept you waiting."

"Not at all," replied Hannibal. "I've hardly been here two minutes."

"That's good. You'll pardon my asking you to dinner in this unceremonious way? My time, as you know, is never my own when Parliament is sitting, and I have to extend my little invitations always on the spur of the moment."

"I quite understand."

"I do hope you were free this evening?"

"Oh, quite free, thanks."

"That's good. Well, I expect you're ready for your dinner, and I know I'm quite ready for mine. I have dispensed with all ceremony, Sir Hannibal, and told them we would dine in my den. Will you come this way?"

Mr. Bothwell opened the door, and Hannibal preceded him out of the room. They crossed

the hall, ascended the first flight of stairs, and a footman threw open the door of Mr. Bothwell's private dining-room. It was not a large room, and struck Hannibal as being uncommonly comfortable for an official residence.

"One can see," he said, "that this is where you live, Mr. Bothwell."

Mr. Bothwell smiled. "I can hardly say that," he replied. "One is really here more in the capacity of a lodger."

"Still, when the rooms are comfortable, lodgers have a way of sticking to them."

"Unless the landlady makes other arrangements," explained Mr. Bothwell.

"But I understand that you're on excellent terms with your landlady?"

"Oh, excellent! Quite excellent! Still, landladies are fickle creatures, and apt to be influenced."

"You mean that they listen to gossip?"

"All landladies are human, Sir Hannibal. Sit down, won't you?"

They both sat, and the dinner began. It was not at all an elaborate dinner — just a spoonful of clear soup, and a little salmon, and a roast chicken, and some asparagus.

"What will you drink?" asked Mr. Bothwell.

"A glass of champagne?"

"No, thank you. I rarely take anything."

"Really! Some aerated water, perhaps?"

“Thank you. That will suit me admirably.”

They conversed, during dinner, on all sorts of subjects, but Hannibal found that the conversation was always coming round to his newspapers. Mr. Bothwell, it seemed, was profoundly ignorant on the subject of newspapers. His questions were delightfully ingenuous. He was very anxious to know just how they were printed, and how the news was collected, and whether there was not often a great difficulty in finding enough matter to fill them, and how long it took to write a leading article, and whether the work was not very trying. It was an old pose of Mr. Bothwell's that he never looked at a newspaper, and Hannibal, though he knew this to be a pose, nevertheless chose to humor his host. He gave him quite a lot of information about the productions of newspapers, and drew a graphic picture of the scene in the courtyard of his offices when the “Little Daily” was coming off the machines and being packed into the carts. He talked casually of circulations of a million, and appeared to astonish Mr. Bothwell with some account of the large sums that had been raised by the “Little Daily” in subscriptions from the public for charitable purposes, thus showing the far-reaching influence of the paper. Mr. Bothwell was intensely interested — far more interested than the solitary footman, who might have been, for all the interest he showed, born and brought up in the foundry of a daily newspaper.

"Of course," said Mr. Bothwell, when the footman had served coffee and left them alone, "you know Lord Beeches, the proprietor of the 'Big Daily'?"

"Oh, quite well," said Hannibal.

"What a charming man!"

"Very charming."

"He is a good deal senior to you, I believe, Sir Hannibal?"

"Yes, about thirty years, I fancy."

"Indeed? So much as that? But then you came to the front so early in life, did you not, Sir Hannibal?"

"I don't consider that I'm yet at the front, Mr. Bothwell."

"No? You surprise me! I should have thought, with all those papers, of which you have been telling me, under your thumb, and that great business, which you have built up, at your back, that you could certainly claim to be quite in the front rank."

"Yes," agreed Hannibal, "but there are better positions than the front rank."

"Oh, of course, I was simply employing a somewhat loose figure of speech. What I really meant to say was that there are few men, if any, in your profession, who could be said to have reached a position higher than your own."

"We mentioned one," Hannibal reminded him, "not five minutes ago."

"You mean Lord Beeches?"

"Yes."

"But, if you'll pardon my saying so, the interests of Lord Beeches are by no means so ramifying as your own, are they?"

"No, they're not. But the 'Big Daily' is sold for a penny, whereas the 'Little Daily' is sold for a halfpenny."

"Surely a mere difference in price should not be allowed to determine the relative professional positions of two such men as yourself and Lord Beeches?"

"But the difference in price, Mr. Bothwell, is not the only difference between us. Lord Beeches takes precedence of me for a reason that has nothing to do with his seniority or the price of his paper."

"I won't pretend to misunderstand you, Sir Hannibal. You mean, of course, that he takes precedence of rank."

"Exactly."

Mr. Bothwell smiled one of his most fascinating smiles.

"That's a matter which will no doubt adjust itself in the course of years, Sir Hannibal."

"But how about the landlady?" Hannibal shot the question at him like a bullet from a catapult.

"The landlady? I'm afraid I fail to grasp your meaning, Sir Hannibal."

“ If your landlady wishes to make a change in her lodger, you’ll not be able to ask me to dinner.”

“ That’s quite true. But, with such good friends as yourself to give the lie to gossip, Sir Hannibal, I trust that it may be some time yet before my landlady requires these pleasant rooms for another lodger.”

“ You have twice mentioned the word ‘ gossip,’ Mr. Bothwell. Might I ask if there is any particular form of gossip going about that is likely to disturb your comfort here? ”

“ That’s a very frank question, and I’ll answer it just as frankly. There’s a very awkward story going about, and one that is calculated to do great mischief. Let us drop metaphor. It is being said in certain quarters that the Government has in mind a measure which, if carried, would increase the cost of living for the poor — indeed, for everybody in the country. I want you to contradict that story, Sir Hannibal.”

“ I shall be only too pleased to contradict it.”

“ That’s good. Thank you very much.”

“ But, before I contradict it, I think I ought to warn you that the story has gone far enough to necessitate a very explicit contradiction. There must be no quibbling with words, Mr. Bothwell. I must either tell the readers of the ‘ Little Daily ’ that you intend to drop Tariff Reform, or I must tell them, on your authority, that the passing of

the Tariff Reform Bill will not raise the price of any article of food consumed in this country. Now, which am I to say? ”

Mr. Bothwell, with another of his charming smiles, pushed the cigarettes across the table to Hannibal.

“ Personally,” he said, “ I like your very direct methods, Sir Hannibal, but I must point out to you that we’re not always able to be quite so direct in political matters as you are, I understand, in your very brilliant paper. The skein of modern politics has become very tangled, and one must approach the unraveling of it with careful and delicate fingers. One might, of course, cut the Gordian knot, but one would, by that act, destroy the whole fabric of the situation which has been built up with so much care. I said that we would drop metaphor, Sir Hannibal, but I see that, so far from dropping it, I am mixing my metaphors. A bad old habit of mine; pray forgive me.”

He paused, and looked at his guest as though expecting him to reply. Hannibal did not reply because he did not feel that it was his turn. He could see that Mr. Bothwell, despite his ease of manner, was a little nervous, and he knew that a nervous man will always go on talking as long as his *vis-à-vis* remains silent. And he was right.

“ I’m really rather surprised,” continued Mr. Bothwell, “ that the friends of this Government should think that we would do anything to em-

barrass the working-classes. In the first place, we realize quite vividly that we are, to a very large extent, dependent upon the goodwill of the working-classes if we wish to remain in office; that is a small point, but still a point that we cannot overlook. A far more powerful reason why we should not take any step that would embarrass the working-classes is that we sympathize very keenly with the difficulties and disadvantages under which they at present labor. Speaking for myself, I would never for one instant lend my support to any measure which, so far from embarrassing the working-classes, did not actually tend to make their lives more prosperous, more comfortable, more secure. Of course it is quite easy to understand that those opposed to us are only too glad to make capital out of the absurd suggestion that we should contemplate a measure opposed to the interests of the working-classes; but I really do fail to understand, Sir Hannibal, how it is that those on our side who are in a position to contradict in the most emphatic manner this preposterous statement shouldn't do so without our having to —"

"Invite them to dinner?" suggested Hannibal, as Mr. Bothwell paused for a suitable word.

"Oh, dear, no!" laughed Mr. Bothwell. "I would rather put it in this way, that I'm sorry to spoil our little dinner by dragging in this somewhat tiresome and unnecessary subject."

"I don't find it at all tiresome. I find it very

interesting. I take it, then, that you intend to go on with Tariff Reform, but that you will pledge your word that the cost of living will not be raised? ”

“ There again,” replied Mr. Bothwell, delicately joining the extreme tips of his delicate fingers, “ you make it very difficult for me to answer you, Sir Hannibal. When you talk of ‘ going on with Tariff Reform ’ you use an expression which, I am sure, is most suitable for a newspaper, but, I can assure you, would be quite unsuitable in a political discussion. Tariff Reform, as it has been called for the sake of convenience, is a very wide subject, a very interesting subject, a very great subject. But it is far from being the only question to which the Government has to give its attention, so that I cannot say more in reply to you at the moment than that the Government is seriously examining the various issues and sub-issues arising out of Tariff Reform, with a view to a consolidation of the Empire on practical and commercial lines, as well as the eventual benefit of every person in this country. Surely that is very clear and straightforward? ”

It was now Hannibal’s turn to smile, and smile he did, straight into the twinkling pince-nez of Mr. Bothwell.

“ You’ve put the point excellently, as you say, Mr. Bothwell, from a politician’s point of view. Now let me put it from a journalist’s point of

view. You want me to contradict in my paper the statement that has been vigorously circulated by the Radical press to the effect that you are pledged to bring in a Bill in support of Tariff Reform, which Bill, if passed, will have the definite effect of raising the price of food in this country. Now, my readers have no use at all for dialectics. They want to know just where they stand. They certainly do believe at this moment that you intend to bring in this Bill, and they certainly do want to know whether it is true that the passing of this Bill will mean a rise in the price of food. If it does mean that, there will certainly be a vacancy for another lodger in these delightful apartments; if it does not mean that, then you may make up your mind to stay here a good while longer. Either way, I must tell them something quite definite in my paper to-morrow morning."

Mr. Bothwell lit a cigarette, and smoked in silence for quite five minutes. Then:

"May I say that I am extremely glad to have had this opportunity of a private and uninterrupted conversation with you, Sir Hannibal?"

Hannibal bowed.

"I'm glad to have had it," continued Mr. Bothwell, "not only because it is a very great pleasure to me to establish friendly relations and a thorough spirit of understanding with one wielding such enormous influences in this country, but also for the reason that I'm afraid I've been doing you

an injustice in my mind. That so often happens, I think, unless one manages to establish human relations. I will admit, quite frankly, Sir Hannibal, that hitherto I have not taken you very seriously. I've heard a great deal about you, and we have, of course, met on various occasions in a purely perfunctory way, but I certainly did not realize before this evening that your first and greatest care in life is the responsibility of your position.

"We were speaking just now of precedence of rank, and you gave me the impression that you felt rather hampered in your work by the fact that, despite the vastness of your business, and the almost unparalleled influence which it gives you, you had not met with such full recognition at the hands of the Government as one or two of your colleagues. Well, Sir Hannibal, I think I can now see my way to remove this nominal but none the less real difference of rank."

Again Hannibal bowed.

"Let me, however, make my position in the matter quite clear, Sir Hannibal. When we invite a man to become a member of the Cabinet, we first of all make quite sure that we're not admitting to our closest and most vital secrets one who is not heart and soul on our side. I know that you'll easily grasp the significance of what I'm saying. Now, in a sense, for any Government to raise a man to the Peerage, or, rather, to put his

name forward in High Quarters for such an honor, is equivalent to inviting a member of the Government to take his place in the Cabinet."

"In other words, Mr. Bothwell, you're offering me a Peerage if I'll support your Party through thick and thin in all my papers?"

"That's dreadfully blunt," replied Mr. Bothwell, smiling, "but I like you to express yourself in your own terms rather than run the risk of there being the least misunderstanding."

"Thank you. I can honestly say that I am with you in the whole of your program, as I know it at present, with the exception of Tariff Reform, and I am willing to support you even on the question of Tariff Reform if you'll authorize me to say that the passing of that Measure will not increase the cost of food for the people. I do not include luxuries; I'm speaking of the mere necessities of life. In plain words, may I tell the readers of the 'Little Daily' to-morrow morning that there's to be no tax on food?"

"I really can see no reason why you should not tell them that."

"But may I do it on your authority?"

"Do you mean on my authority, or on the authority of the Government? Life is uncertain, Sir Hannibal, and I shouldn't feel justified in committing any Government of the future to any definite statement."

"I shall be content if you'll allow me to say,

without contradiction, that you, personally, will never consent to any increase in the cost of living for the poor."

"Yes," said Mr. Bothwell, slowly and deliberately, "you may say that."

Hannibal rose. There was no sign on his face of the triumph that he was feeling. He did not want to shout, "I have won!" in Mr. Bothwell's face, but he knew that he had won, and he knew that Mr. Bothwell must also know it.

Mr. Bothwell rang the bell. Then, as a servant entered, the two men shook hands, wished each other goodnight, and Hannibal drove along the Embankment to the office of the "Little Daily."

It was exactly ten o'clock when Mr. Radford heard Hannibal's voice through the telephone asking him to go down to his room. Mr. Radford saw at a glance that the Chief had brought off another "scoop" for the paper.

"No tax on food," said Hannibal, the very moment that Mr. Radford entered.

"Good."

"On the highest authority."

"Right. Would you like to see the leader?"

"Yes. Send it down in manuscript as soon as it's written."

"It is written."

"What?"

"It is written."

“ On those lines? ”

“ Yes.”

“ How did you guess? ”

Radford laughed happily. “ I didn’t guess. I knew.”

“ You know too much, Radford. Send up for the leader. In the meantime, get the news written up. Double-column headings, and plenty of them. I want to see the final proofs before I leave the office.”

“ Very good.”

Mr. Radford advanced a step and held out his hand. Hannibal grasped it. Then, without another word, the editor went upstairs with a light foot and a leaping heart. He had a piece of news for England which was worth the telling.

XIX

ROUND THE CORNER INTO ADAMS STREET

IT was after midnight when Hannibal finally left the office and told his man to drive home. They went along the Embankment, and Hannibal thought of the nights when he used to pace up and down by the river, trying to get the idea that should make the success of "You and I." He thought of Mr. Brandon, and wondered whether that queer creature was still in the land of the living, or whether he had finally decided that the mere task of breathing was too near akin to slavery to be longer endured by a man of free and independent spirit.

As they neared Charing Cross, a sudden fancy came to him. Taking up the speaking-tube, he directed the driver to go down Villiers Street and take the first turn to the left. The chauffeur was not in the least surprised; he was quite accustomed to strange, and sudden, and inexplicable orders when Hannibal was in the brougham.

At the top of York Buildings, Hannibal stopped the brougham, and, telling his man to wait, strolled down the familiar *cul-de-sac*. It was all just as he had known it twenty years ago, save that some

houses at the bottom on the left-hand side had been pulled down, and red-brick offices built in their place. The house in which he had lived with Sheila, in which they had passed their honeymoon, from which the first numbers of "You and I" had been sent to the printer, to which Mr. Hamm used to come and sit very quietly in the corner or help to cook the sausages, and in which Mr. Brandon, in a flash of drunken genius, had suddenly hit upon the line for the bill that Hannibal so badly wanted, was just the same as ever. There was a light on the top floor, and Hannibal had an impulse to climb the stairs and make the acquaintance of the inmates. Would he find a youthful journalist and his still more youthful wife surrounded by letters, and manuscripts, and proof-sheets? If he did, it would be a glorious thing, and quite in accordance with his mood of the moment, to help them over their difficulties and put them on the right road to success, as he so easily could.

While he was still looking up, a girl leaned from the open window and looked down into the street. She said something in a soft voice, and a man joined her and put his arm about her shoulders. . . .

Hannibal moved away. After all, what right had he to intrude upon them? Whatever their vocation in life, it was better that they should work out their own success for themselves. They

did not want a stranger, however rich and powerful, to intrude his advice or even his money upon them. If the man came to him, as he once went to Mr. Hamm, that would be another matter. As it was, he felt himself a stranger and an interloper in York Buildings, and there was already a crowd of loafers round his electric brougham that was waiting outside the public-house in John Street.

"You can't go back, Drew," said Hannibal to the chauffeur.

"Beg pardon, sir?"

"I say you can't go back. You must go forward."

"Very good, sir. I can easily pull up the hill and get to the Strand through Adam Street."

"All right," said Hannibal, and away they went. That was the very last visit he ever paid to York Buildings. He never tried, being an exceedingly astute person, to go back.

He remembered his promise to Sheila, of course, and went straight to her room. She was in bed, reading the latest volume of a young poet in whose talent she was interested.

"Well," she said, "have you been all this time at the office?"

"Not quite. I've just come from a place you know very well."

"What place is it?"

"York Buildings."

“What on earth have you been doing down there?”

“I just went to have a look at it.”

“Why to-night in particular?”

“Because we’ve reached another big milestone to-night.”

“Something has happened — something to do with Bothwell. Tell me at once what it is!”

“We had a very charming little dinner, and it wasn’t at all dull.”

“What did he want to see you about?”

“He wanted to find out whether I realized the responsibility of my position.”

“Bothwell’s a silly old duffer! I could have told him that.”

“Why, do you think I do?”

“I know you do. I know that you would never use your influence except for the benefit of the country. That’s why I’m glad that you’ve stood out against this wretched Tariff Reform. Did Bothwell think he could talk you over?”

“Bothwell is a Party man, and he used one of the weapons of his Party. I suppose he tried to bribe me.”

“Bribe you? How could he bribe you? What could he give you that you haven’t got?”

“It had occurred to him that you, my dear, might not like going into dinner after the peeresses.”

Sheila sat up. “You don’t mean to say, Han,

that he was willing to make you a peer right off? ”

“ Yes, I do.”

“ Good gracious! And you’re only forty! What on earth did he want you to do for it? ”

“ Merely give my support to Tariff Reform.”

“ Of course you refused! ”

“ No, I didn’t.”

“ You gave way? ”

“ Not precisely. I struck a bargain with him. I made him give me his word that he, personally, would not countenance the Measure, or any Measure, if it meant raising the price of the people’s food.”

“ Did he agree to that? ”

“ Yes. We’re publishing it to-morrow. It’ll be known in Fleet Street in a couple of hours from now.”

“ But that’s a triumph, Han! Why, that’s the very thing you’ve been fighting for the whole time! So you’ve got that and the peerage as well! You really are a wonder! ”

“ Not to you, surely? ”

“ Yes, even to me sometimes. . . . Of course they’ll say all sorts of nasty things.”

“ Oh, yes, they’ll say I’ve been bought. That’s a certainty. But we’ve learned long since not to care what they say, haven’t we, dear? ”

“ Yes,” said Sheila. “ We’ve learned that, and we’ve learned a great many other things since we started together twenty years ago in York Build-

ings. Sometimes I wish we could unlearn it all and go back to the simple children that we were then."

"I'm not sure that I was so very simple even then. And, anyhow, you can't go back, as I told Drew a little while ago. He wasn't at all surprised. He said he could easily pull up the hill and get to the Strand by way of Adam Street. If you think it out, you'll see that Drew has pretty well summed up the whole of life in those few words. We all have to pull up the hill and make for the Strand by way of Adam Street."

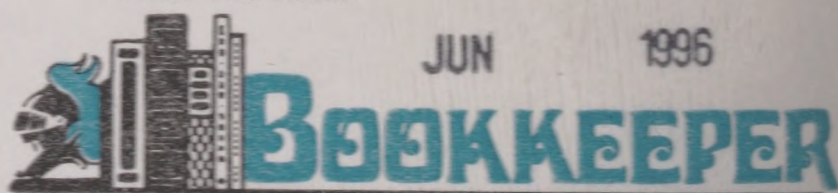
"At any rate, Han, you're well up the hill."

"Yes, but I'm only at the beginning of Adam Street. Much may happen before I get to the Strand!"

THE END

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